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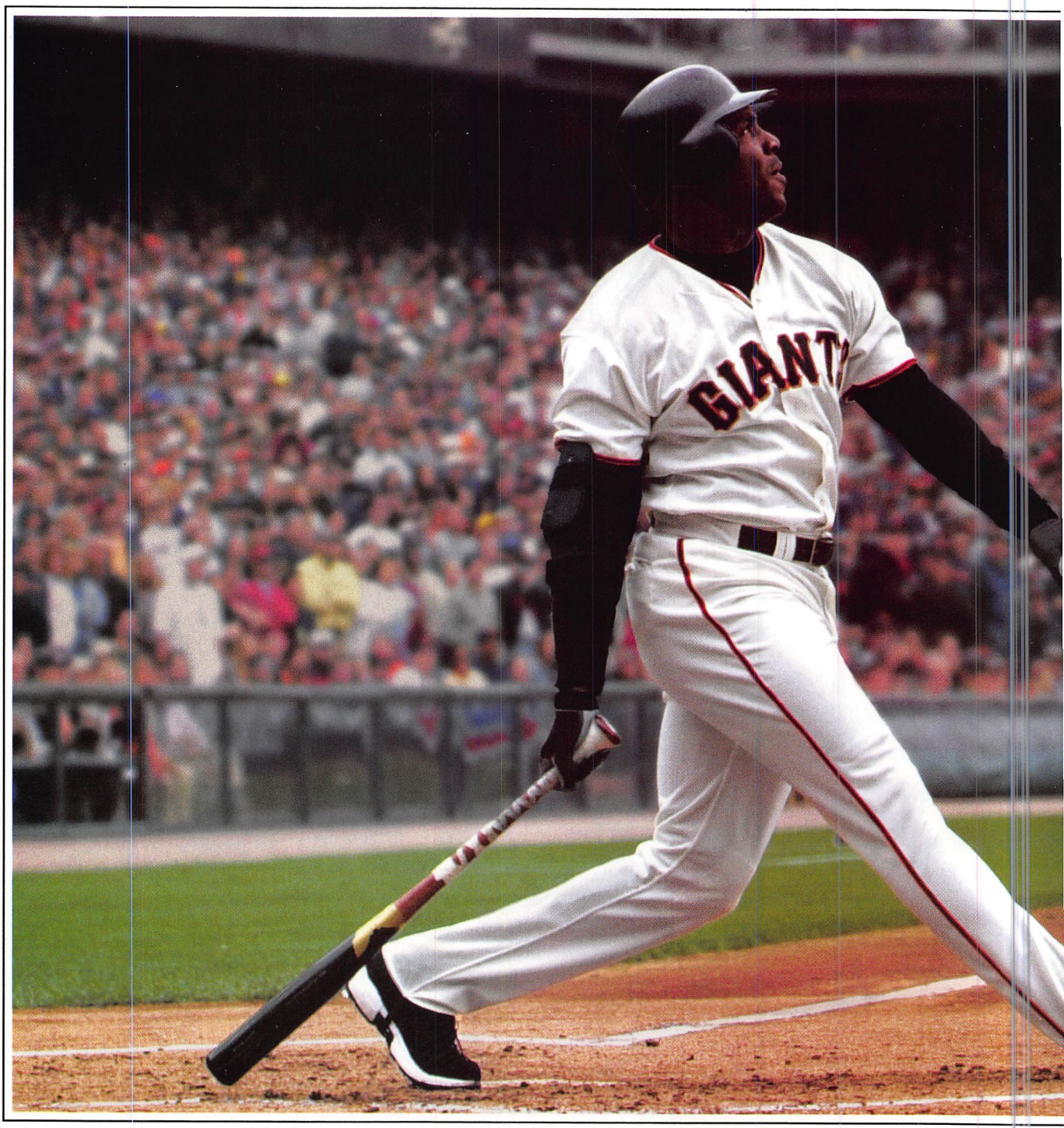
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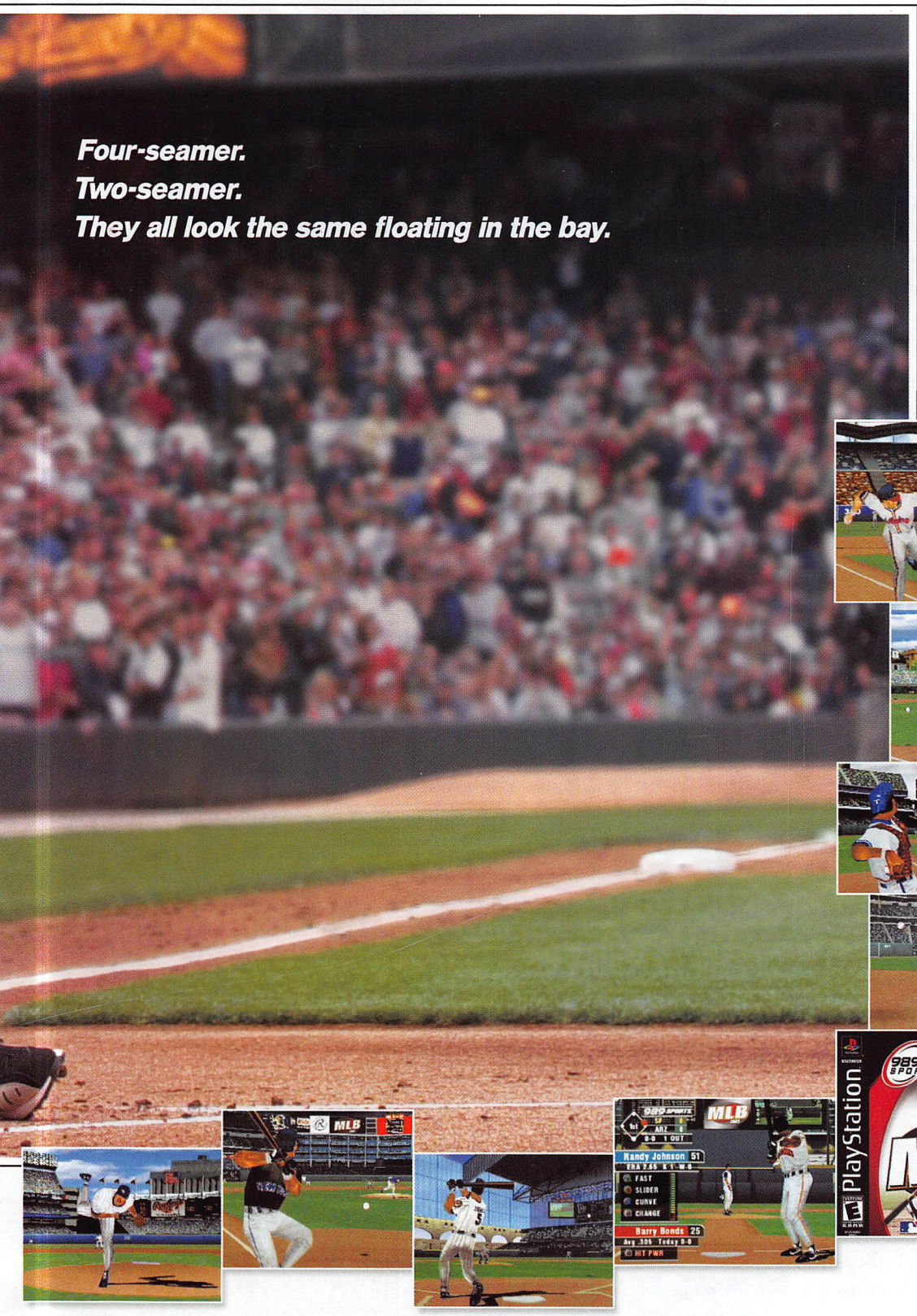
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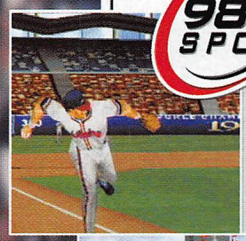


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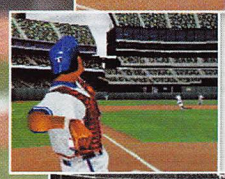
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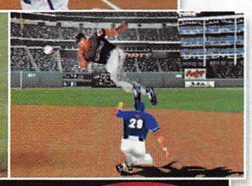
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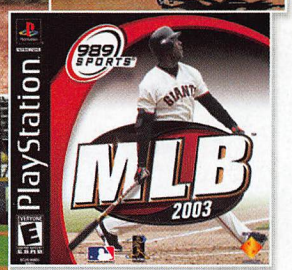






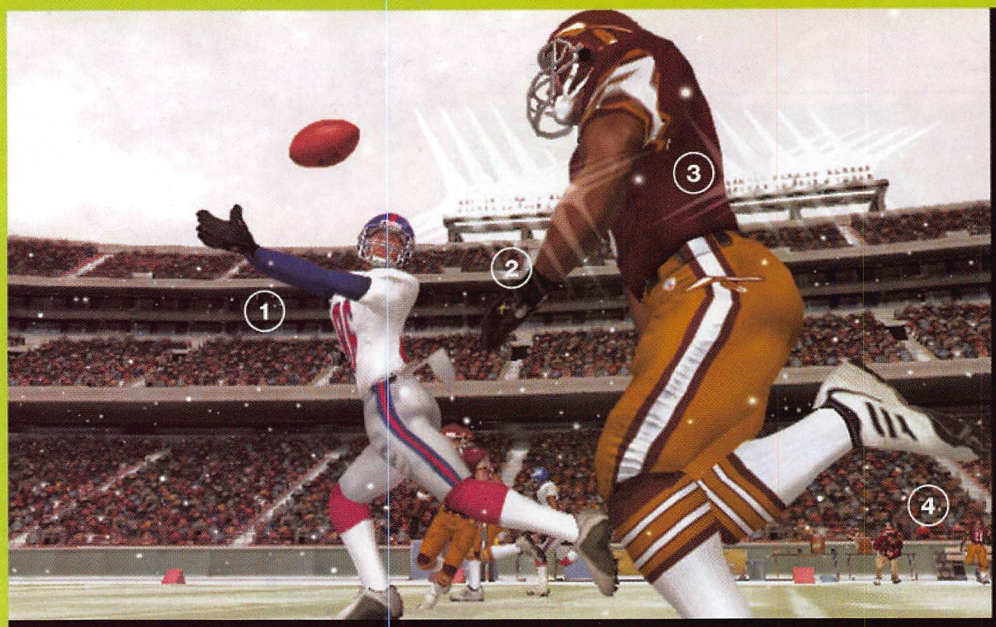


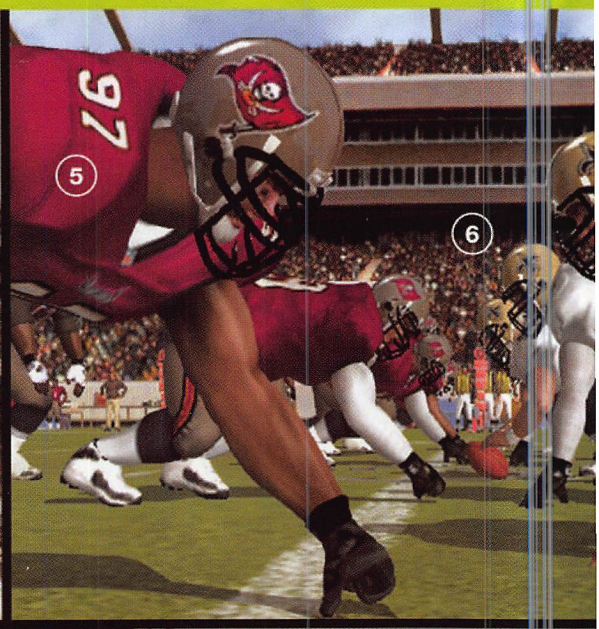




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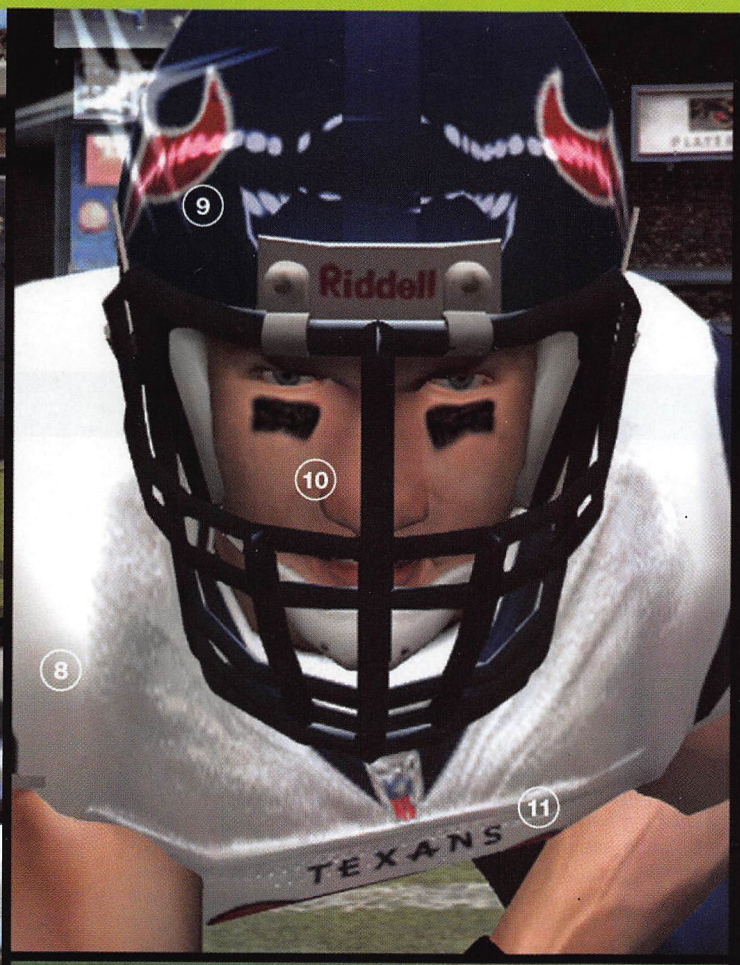
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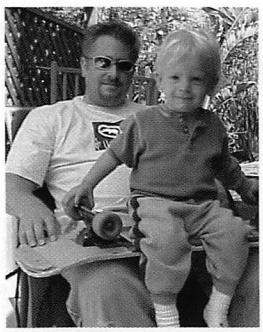
VOL. 1 ISSUE 8

Rolling out of our first E3 as **play**, where I got to hang with *Shinobi* Producer Takashi Uriu, as Sega PR luminary Bryce, Uriu, and I competed—after several Coronas—to see who could combo-slice the most ninjas in a single blow (talk about your moments), we got right down to business here at **play**. After the long journey home (about two hours in traffic), we had only five days left to crank out the July issue in order to get our E3 coverage in under the wire, and it was like, more than half the book, because...we're insane. Doing so came at a price however, cutting our lead-time for this issue by a week, so back in we dove. I'm just coming up for air now, so with press time just hours away (it's late June), I'm at a loss—a rare moment—over what to talk about in this, my editorial, a page that no one probably reads, but I cap off each issue filling in anyway. Looking around, there isn't much in the way of problems or controversy about. The worst problem I can think of is Solid Snake on a skateboard, and worse yet, the fact that people seem to be accepting it. What's next? Tomb Raider BMX breaks? Shinobi surfing? This is a trend that I pray hardcore *MGS* fans reject like a 32X-Sega-CD-Virtual Boy hybrid from Atari. To think they would stab drama in the heart with such a farce is just wrong. Kojima was bound to cave to the apparent Western extreme sports craze eventually, I suppose. I guess no one told him that those kids aren't the people playing *MGS*. My 9-year-old cousin can play *T-Hawk* in his sleep, but doesn't even know what Metal Gear is. If the percentage of enthusiast or hardcore users had diminished radically, or if the game stopped selling...maybe. But it's my experience that the avid gamers are the ones who make games like *MGS* a success—often making the difference between a hit and a miss in this industry. We are, if anything, growing in numbers faster then the KISS Army. I can see drafting the entire cast of a game, like *DOA* for instance, into a stand-alone game, but injecting it like a virus into the actual adventure? Muy big problemah. Ah-ha, so there was something to rant about!

On the flip side of the equation, good stuffs (that's not a typo, we speak that way) are happening on the Nintendo front! I've spent the last few months whining about how they've been shutting us out, even though our readers are their best customers. To us and the bulk of our readers, Nintendo is like an institution (I'd say holy institution, but those seem to be plunging towards the fiery depths faster then you can say "Hadoken!"), a company whose games have shaped our very entertainment lives. To a newbie, Sony is the obvious super power, but that is a fairly recent development in the long-running console wars. Anyway, beginning with *Mario Sunshine* we'll be getting preview ops once again, so, finally, we'll be able to bring you first-party Nintendo previews, reviews, and hopefully features, depending on Nintendo's timing. Either way, it's one small step for Nintendo but one giant leap for **play**. Waiting until *Mario* shipped to write the review would have been more than any of us could take.

Before you dig into August, I'd of course like to thank you for picking us up and also ask that you comment on our evolving balance, if you're so inclined. It has been our credo to focus on the best and leave the rest, to which we have now added the best of sports and some PC. Let us know how you like it. There are those who accuse us of being too positive, but keep in mind we cover for the most part games we, and therefore you, will probably really like. We're free to do so because we're the bottom line here at **play**. We've added more reviews to tip the scales but will always focus on the games that we think you really want to know more about or that the other more mainstream mags may not shine a light on. We are a unique product for a unique reader, so it's important that we hear from you. Of course, that will be a lot easier once our web site goes live very soon, but in the meantime drop me, or any of the staff, an email. So much for that rare moment, eh?

"I HOPE THEY REJECT IT LIKE A 32X-SEGA CD-VIRTUAL BOY HYBRID FROM ATARI..."



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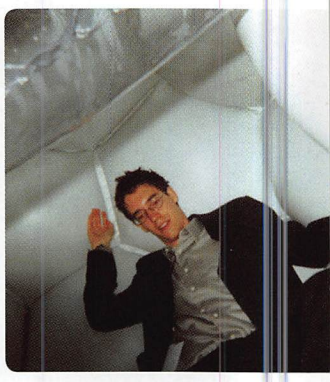
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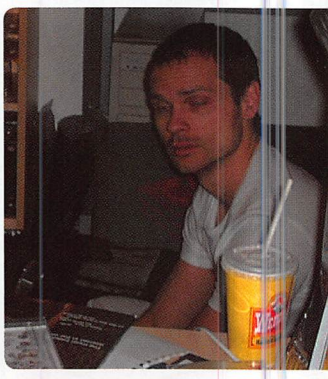
Jon M Gibson
Executive Editor

It was immediately apparent that Jon was stuck in the giant bubble—there was no getting out. Manifested from a childhood fear of enormous bubbles, he was quick to realize that the *only* way he could escape was by popping the beast. Unfortunately, security had confiscated all sharp, pointy objects at the door—oh well.



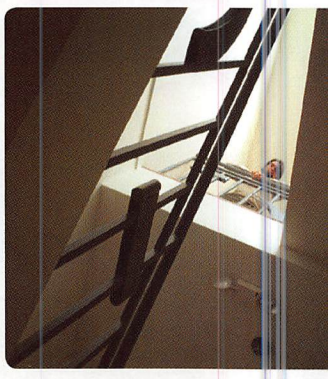
Brady Fiechter
Editorial Director

It's been a long, strange month for Mr. Fiechter, and all he seems to talk about are *Minority Report*, Moby, yoga and Ashton cigars. After the close of this issue, he plans to watch *Minority Report* again, listen to *18* too many times, stretch a lot and enjoy a smoke. It's a simple life.



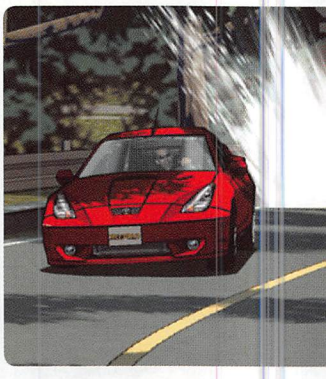
Michael Hobbs
Art Director

For what reason is Michael standing atop this staircase? Is there some significance to this? Perhaps he is trying to escape something, some evil force manifesting itself as a dark blue cloud. Perhaps not.



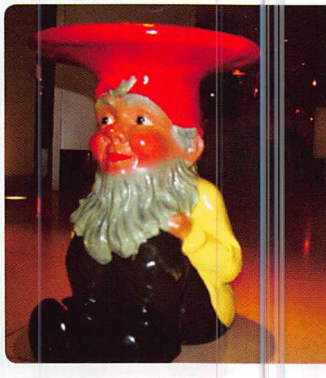
Nelson Lui
Associate Art Director

Curious about where Nelson spent his four-hour lunch breaks, we hired a private detective to tail him for a week. It appears he's taken to Automodelista Tron-style, getting behind the wheel of one of those bitchin' cel-shaded rides. If you look closely, you can see his big grin through the windshield. Buckle up, kids.



Tom Ham
Contributing Writer

Tom has vanished. It wasn't until after we completed our E3 wrap-up issue that we realized he'd stopped calling. It's been a month, and since Tom is no where to be found, we had an "artist's rendering" drawn up. Based on a witness's description, we created this image. Notice that his head doubles as a tabletop—how clever.



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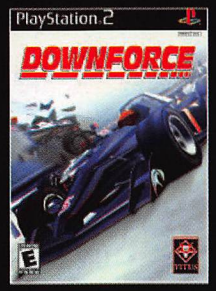


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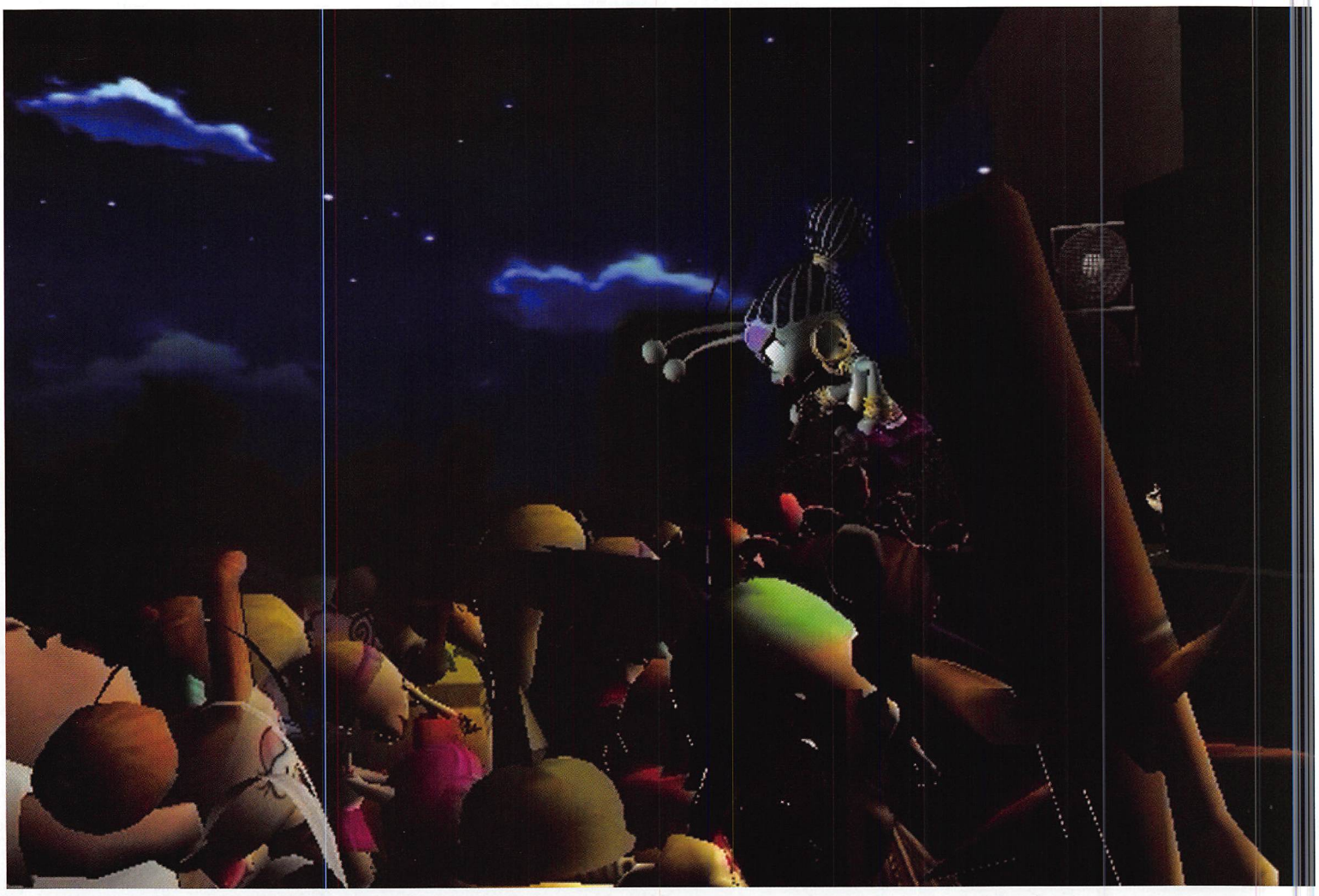
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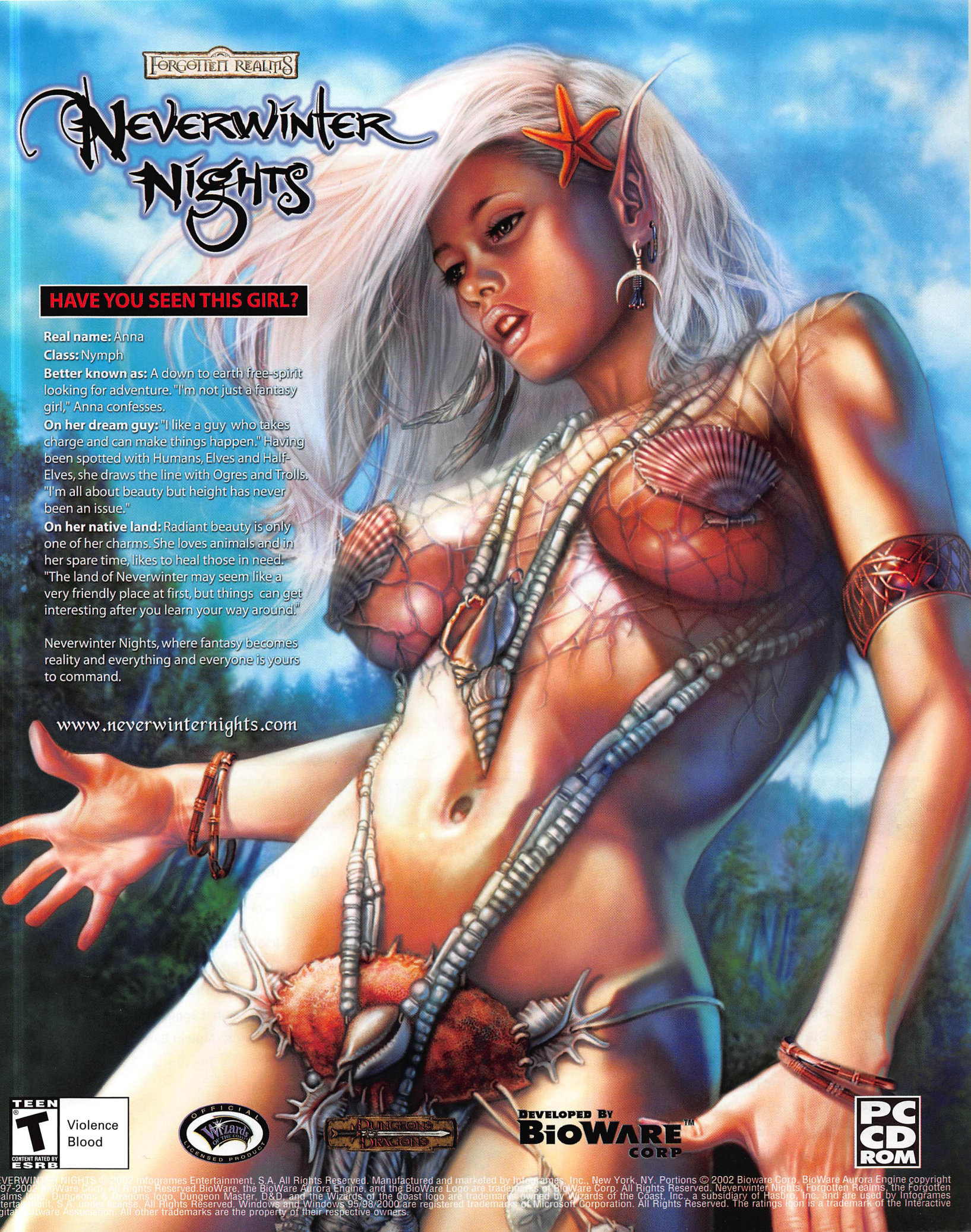
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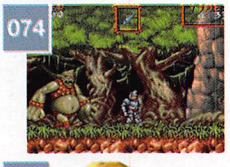
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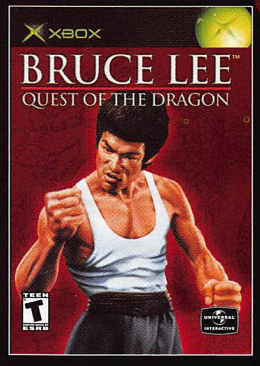
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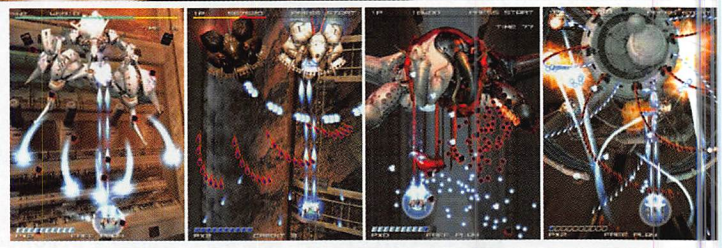
edited by **play** magazine staff

TREASURE, TREASURE

Time to dust off the Dreamcast...



Treasure has finally caved, and announced that it will release its highly, highly anticipated shooter, *Ikaruga*, this September 5th for the Dreamcast, which makes the console once again (and forever!) a hot commodity. The game, a Naomi conversion, is another 2D feast, in the vein of *Radiant Silvergun*, the company's groundbreaking Saturn game, arguably the best top-down shooter ever created. Like *Silvergun,* it features progressive AI and groundbreaking special effects that fill the screen. No word yet on a US port/publisaher for the title, although it's a safe bet that it's on many a radar.



You may need a friend to help flip the big-screen onto its side...

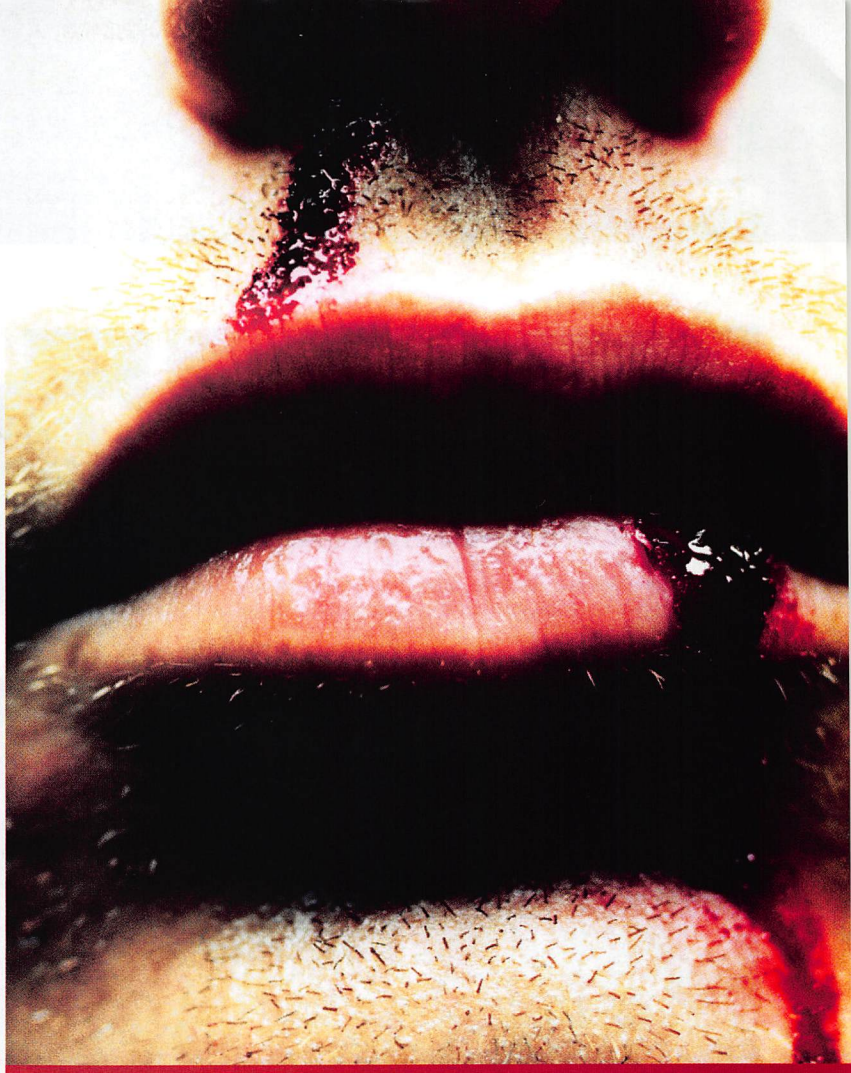
COOL AND THE G.A.N.G.

They write the songs that make the whole world schwing...

As we all know, audio is king when it comes to delivering a truly epic interactive experience. From the groundbreaking sounds of *Ninja Gaiden* on the NES to the 16-bit stylings of Yuzo Koshiro to today's mind-numbing 5.1, music has and always will be king. G.A.N.G., founded by America's most accomplished interactive audio artist, and the busiest composer in gaming, Tommy Tallarico, is the first community for the ever-burgeoning society of musicians and sound effects engineers in this emerging industry of ours, which now covers video games, websites, location-based entertainment, PDAs, cell phones, toys, hand-helds, edutainment, etc. The company's mission statement asserts, "One of the main focuses and goals of G.A.N.G. is to encourage and promote the creation of better-sounding audio, which advances interactive industries by helping produce more competitive and entertaining products. G.A.N.G. provides a sense of community to its fellowship and the interactive community through the sharing of knowledge and experience among members and related organizations industry-wide. G.A.N.G. promotes quality and the recognition of quality through the annual G.A.N.G. Awards, G.A.N.G. Seal of Approval program, and various membership levels." These and other such audio revelations can be yours by dialing them up on the web at www.audiogang.org, which, by the way, is, like, the coolest web site we've ever seen. Perhaps if we're good this year they'll put on a concert at next year's E3 just like the ones game musicians put on in Japan. Could you imagine?

G.A.N.G.

GAME AUDIO NETWORK GUILD



PUT UP YOUR DUKES

A first person shooter on GBA that actually looks good?

Just in time to slide into this month's Ink came these impressive new shots of Take Two's upcoming *Duke Nukem Advance*, the game that will convince you, for the first time, that the GBA can actually do 3D—first person shooters, in particular, which to date have been pretty shite on the system. The game pits duke against aliens, no surprise there, plotting to take over Earth; ditto, in 19 levels of Teen rated blood and violence. Whether or not Duke's babes show up for the festivities remains to be seen, but it's safe to assume Hooters will give them the time off.



Pixelly? Yes, but as pixelly as the competition? Ah, hell no!

IS IT THE SHOES?

These boots are made for... stomping zombies until they're dead

Interplay and Journeys: yep, the teen footwear retailer has announced a national promotion showcasing Interplay's *Hunter: The Reckoning*. The promotion will start July 1, 2002 in 560 Journeys stores nationwide and will feature a contest and special offers from Journeys footwear and other sponsors. For the promotion, which runs through July, every customer will have the opportunity to enter an online sweepstakes with a chance to win cool stuff from Interplay, White Wolf, GameStop, nVidia, Dolby, MonsterCable, Royal Elastics, and Microsoft. The promotion will be supported by a national radio, online and in-store advertising campaign. "Journeys has a customer base that perfectly matches our demographic for *Hunter: The Reckoning*," said the chick from Interplay. "Working with Journeys enables us to generate high-level interest and exposure for our games to a more mainstream audience." Just what the world needs, a mainstream audience for an M-rated gore fest. "One of the key components to our marketing strategy at Journeys is finding unique ways to promote and reflect our customers' lifestyle," said the Journey's dude. Since entertainment is such an integral part of our customers' lifestyle it makes sense to team up with one of the top video game publishers in the marketplace." If they really care they'll make their friggin' stores bigger and play some decent videos. We'd also like to see a pair of special edition Zombie Stompers. Now that would be cool.



When I can buy a pair of boots like these at Journeys, I'll... buy a pair of boots like these at Journeys.

ink

ANIMEZING BOX



When Robotech hits every major console this fall, devotees will be able to purchase this limited Robotech: Battlecry Collectors Edition Box, packed with more goodies then a Zentradi space cruiser. The $79.99 box-o-joy includes: the game, the CD soundtrack, five original pieces of full color concept art, numbered dog tags, an exclusive T-Shirt (featuring an image of "Skull One") and a lenticular motion card that changes from Veritech fighter to Batteloid to Guardian...all in a keepsake box. You'll have to hurry though, as quantities will be strictly limited.

LET THE FRAY BEGIN

Microsoft digs in for the long haul... the console wars are back on

Microsoft executives are predicting heavy losses related to the Xbox this year, which is no big surprise at this early juncture. The big news is Microsoft's plan to launch a new machine in the not-too-distant future that combines the features of the Xbox with UltimateTV, a set-top box that features digital video recording. With this news and the new low Xbox price, it would seem the company is now digging in for the long haul in their bid for console supremacy. Microsoft expects to sell 3 to 4 million Xboxes by summer's end, and 9 to 11 million by June, 2003. Xbox Live will soon figure into the equation too, as will the increase in software sales as a result of the new price. With 42 billion in cash reserves, it's safe to assume Microsoft can stay the course for as long as it takes and as they exhibited at E3, they certainly have the brands. Currently the cost of goods associated with each Xbox is around $325 and they sell into retail at $175, so their work is cut out for them. Sony takes a hit on the PS2 as well, but not as much due to the current console's reduced unit cost with redesigned chips and fewer small components. Microsoft will have a similarly cheaper unit ready by fall. The console wars are officially back on!

Brands like the upcoming MechAssault assure the Xbox a bright shiny future.





[THEY CAN SMELL IT]

9.1.02

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MATURE
M
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB
Blood and Gore
Violence

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A vampire's
worst fear is
no longer the
dawn.



Control Buffy as you kick vampire ash all over Sunnydale High, The Bronze and anywhere else bloodsuckers raise their ugly heads. Seek out Giles, Xander and Willow for clues and cautions. But casting hordes of fang-freaks back from whence they came is a Slayer's job.

Use wooden stakes, fireballs or your surroundings to start taking the "un" out of the undead. Only on Xbox.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer™

TEEN T
CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Mild Language
Suggestive Themes

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XBOX

top 10

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READERS MOST WANTED

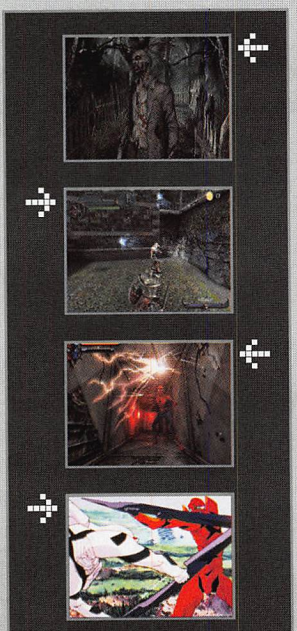
1. MARIO SUNSHINE-GC
2. LEGEND OF ZELDA-GC
3. PANZER DRAGOON ORTA-XBOX
4. METROID-GC
5. SLY COOPER-PS2
6. VEXX-XBOX
7. MALICE-XBOX
8. IKARUGA-DC
9. CASTLEVANIA HoD-PS2
10. CONTRA-PS2

play games TOP TEN

1. ENCLAVE-XBOX
2. TOEJAM & EARL III -XBOX
3. ETERNAL DARKNESS-GC
4. SUPER GHOULS N GHOSTS-GBA
5. ONIMUSHA 2-PS2
6. CASTLEVANIA HoD-GBA
7. TIMESPLITTERS 2-PS2
8. COLIN McRAE RALLY 3-PS2
9. HUNTER THE RECKONING-XBOX
10. ROBOTECH-PS2

play anime TOP TEN

1. EVANGELION: DEATH & REBIRTH
2. HELLSING
3. STEEL ANGEL KURUMI
4. ARMITAGE: DUAL-MATRIX
5. VANDREAD
6. THE SOULTAKER
7. EX-DRIVER
8. SAMURAI GIRL REAL BOUT HIGH SCHOOL
9. GTO
10. BERSERK



READERS TOP TEN

1. RESIDENT EVIL-GC
2. ETERNAL DARKNESS-GC
3. MEDAL OF HONOR-PS2
4. SUPER MARIO ADVANCE-GBA
5. HUNTER THE RECKONING-XBOX
6. GTA 3-PS2
7. NEVERWINTER NIGHTS-PC
8. CRASH BANDICOOT WoC-Xbox
9. LOST KINGDOMS-GC
10. WIPEOUT FUSION-PS2

BEST SELLING JULY

1. SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE GAME-PS2
2. DRAGON BALL Z: LEGEND OF GOKU-GBA
3. GTA 3-PS2
4. MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINES-PS2
5. GRAN TURISMO 3: A-SPEC-PS2
6. RESIDENT EVIL-GC
7. SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE GAME-GC
8. HALO-XBOX
9. SPIDERMAN: THE MOVIE GAME-XBOX
10. SUPER MARIO ADVANCE-GC

GAME RELEASE SCHEDULE*

PS2
8/01 CONFLICT ZONE
8/05 RIDING SPIRITS
8/06 RHL: RUN LIKE HELL
8/06 NCAA COLLEGE FOOTBALL 2K3
8/06 THE THING
8/12 NFL BLITZ 20-03
8/13 MADDEN NFL 2003
8/13 NFL GAMEDAY 2003
8/13 STREET HOOPS: KING OF THE COURT
8/13 FISHERMAN'S BASS CLUB
8/13 NCAA GAMEBREAKERS 2003
8/13 MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2
8/13 JIMMY NEUTRON BOY GENIUS
8/15 ARMORED CORE 3
8/15 DRAGON'S LAIR 3D
8/16 NFL QB CLUB 2003
8/16 H2OVERDIVE
8/16 TUROK: EVOLUTION
8/21 NFL 2K3
8/27 TWISTED METAL: BLACK ONLINE
8/27 SOCOM U.S. NAVY SEALS
8/27 PRO RACE DRIVER
8/27 COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE
8/28 ROCKET POWER: BEACH BANDITS
8/28 ANTX EXTREME RACING

XBOX
8/02 AQUAMAN: BATTLE FOR ATLANTIS
8/06 NFL FEVER 2003
8/06 AGGRESSIVE INLINE
8/06 BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER
8/06 NCAA COLLEGE FOOTBALL 2K3
8/12 NFL BLITZ 20-03
8/13 MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2
8/13 STREET HOOPS
8/13 MADDEN NFL 2003
8/15 NFL QB CLUB 2003
8/20 NFL 2K3
8/20 DEAD TO RIGHTS
8/26 MLB SLUGFEST 20-03
8/27 ANTZ EXTREME RACING
8/27 PRISONER OF WAR
8/27 COMMANDOS 2: MEN OF COURAGE
8/31 TUROK: EVOLUTION

GAMECUBE
8/06 FREEKSTYLE
8/06 AGGRESSIVE INLINE
8/12 DISNEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR
8/12 NFL BLITZ 20-03
8/13 BEACH SPIKERS
8/13 MADDEN NFL 2003
8/15 CAPCOM VS. SNK 2 EO
8/20 WORMS BLAST
8/26 MLB SLUGFEST 20-03
8/26 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
8/27 ROCKET POWER: BEACH BANDITS
8/31 TUROK: EVOLUTION

PC
8/04 RAYMAN ARENA
8/05 ARTHUR'S QUEST
8/05 HARD TRUCK: 18 WHEELS
8/06 THE THING
8/09 COLD ZERO
8/13 MADDEN NFL 2003
8/13 UNREAL TOURNAMENT 2003
8/13 ALIEN VS. PREDATOR: PRIMAL HUNT (EXPANSION PACK)
8/14 CALL OF CTHULHU: DARK CORNERS OF THE EARTH
8/14 COUNTER-STRIKE: CONDITION ZERO
8/14 1503 A.D. THE NEW WORLD
8/14 BEAM BREAKERS
8/14 ARX FATALIS
8/14 PRINCE OF QIN
8/15 HYPER RAILS
8/16 SEASON TICKET FOOTBALL 2003
8/19 EARTH AND BEYOND
8/19 MEDIreview: TOTAL WAR
8/20 VIRTUAL RESORT: SPRING BREAK
8/21 OPERATION TIGER HUNT
8/22 CABELA'S BIG GAME HUNTER 6
8/22 CELTIC KINGS: RAGE OF WAR
8/23 COMBAT FLIGHT SIM 3
8/23 WORMS BLAST
8/27 SNIPER
8/27 ICEWIND DALE II
8/27 ICEWIND DALE II: COLLECTOR'S EDITION
8/27 MAFIA
8/29 O.R.B.
8/31 ANTZ RACING
8/31 FARSCAPE: THE GAME
8/31 WARBIRDS 3

*SHIP DATES SUBJECT TO CHANGE

> playback

08.2002

Whether you have questions, criticisms—or if you just need to say what's on your mind—write us here at **play**. It's time to get a major forum going...off-line. **Email your queries and concerns to:**

letters@play-magazine.com

SUPER SONNET

Oh, the joys of finding such a wonderful magazine—one that covers favored topics and pop culture.

Oh, the horrors that await within the mailbox upon its receipt—how will it be mangled this time?

Oh, Makers of a gaming and anime magazine so beautiful it is worthy to be collected and cherished over time:

Please consider wrapping it in a protective cover of plastic for those of the devoted. A simple baggy is all I ask for.

My thanks,
((nettic))

Oh, the horror in the discovery of your issues crumpled state. We shall mail you anew and, in the future, protect thine issues. Seriously, send us an e-mail and we'll see about replacing that battered copy of **play**. We will be poly-bagging all subscriptions within a month or two—until then, tell posty to go gentle on the mags.



MAIL BONDING

July's issue is your best yet—phenomenal E3 coverage. As a 38-year-old lifetime gamer who has owned every console—from NES to the GameCube—I can easily say that your publication has no equal. It's obvious that your staff dearly loves gaming and has a special appreciation for art, style and games that possess that indefinable quality, placing them heads and shoulders above the rest of the pack. As a magazine junkie—I receive around 50 every month, including every major gaming mag—I say *no* other publication can touch your production values. From the size of the magazine, the high quality paper, huge photos that pop off the screen to the amazing illustrations, graphics and writing—**play** simply smokes the competition.

The only other publication that even came close, *Next Gen*, is sadly gone. Thanks for presenting games as interactive art from an adult point-of-view. If there's any justice in this world, your magazine will be there when those of us in our 30s and 40s are 70 or 80 and still saying games—like no other art form—rock.

To your continued success,
Terry DeVore

And to you, my good man, we say, yay—yay for your cunning intellect and obvious penchant for quality. May we all play until we hit our graves—or better yet, sign up for cryogenics, awaken in a hundred years or so, and have at those holograms! Thank you for your kind words and support.

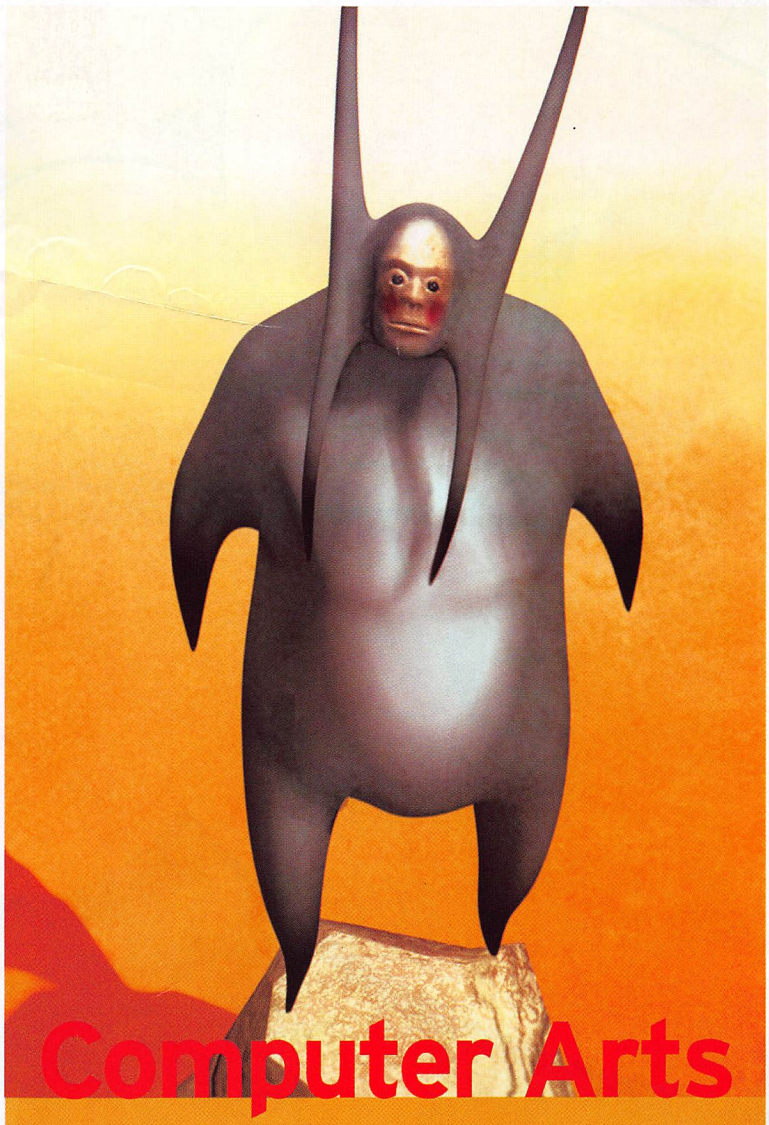
LEI IT ON US

I'm a 21-year-old gamer who lives in Hawaii and I just wanted to write to you guys and tell you all what a fabulous job you're doing with **play**. It's the magazine that I look forward to reading the most month after month. Anyway, Dave, I've been reading your prose since your days at *GameFan*, a mag I really loved. I also followed you (and Mike Hobbs and Brady Fiechter) to *Gamers' Republic*, a mag that I felt was very insightful, as well as nicely designed. My point is, I feel as if I know you personally and that I can trust your reviews of games because you're a true gamer. It's nice to know that, in this age of regurgitated press releases, there is one magazine all of us gamers can look to for solid opinions and thoughts. Again, thanks. Oh yeah, and I love your Taliban jokes. It's so cool to read that stuff in a game mag! Keep up the excellent work, guys. I mean that. From one hardcore game playin' American to another: PLAY ON!!!

Take care,
Keona Tang

Taliban jokes? Didn't they break up? Why would we joke about such obviously well-balanced (and fashion conscience!) people? Our experiences in Hawaii tell us that the game scene there is pretty hardcore, so your words are much appreciated. It must be great to live in a place where you can play *Kelly Slater's Pro Surfing* and then go shred the same waves!

"As a 38-year-old lifetime gamer who has owned every console—from NES to the GameCube—, I can easily say that your publication has no equal."



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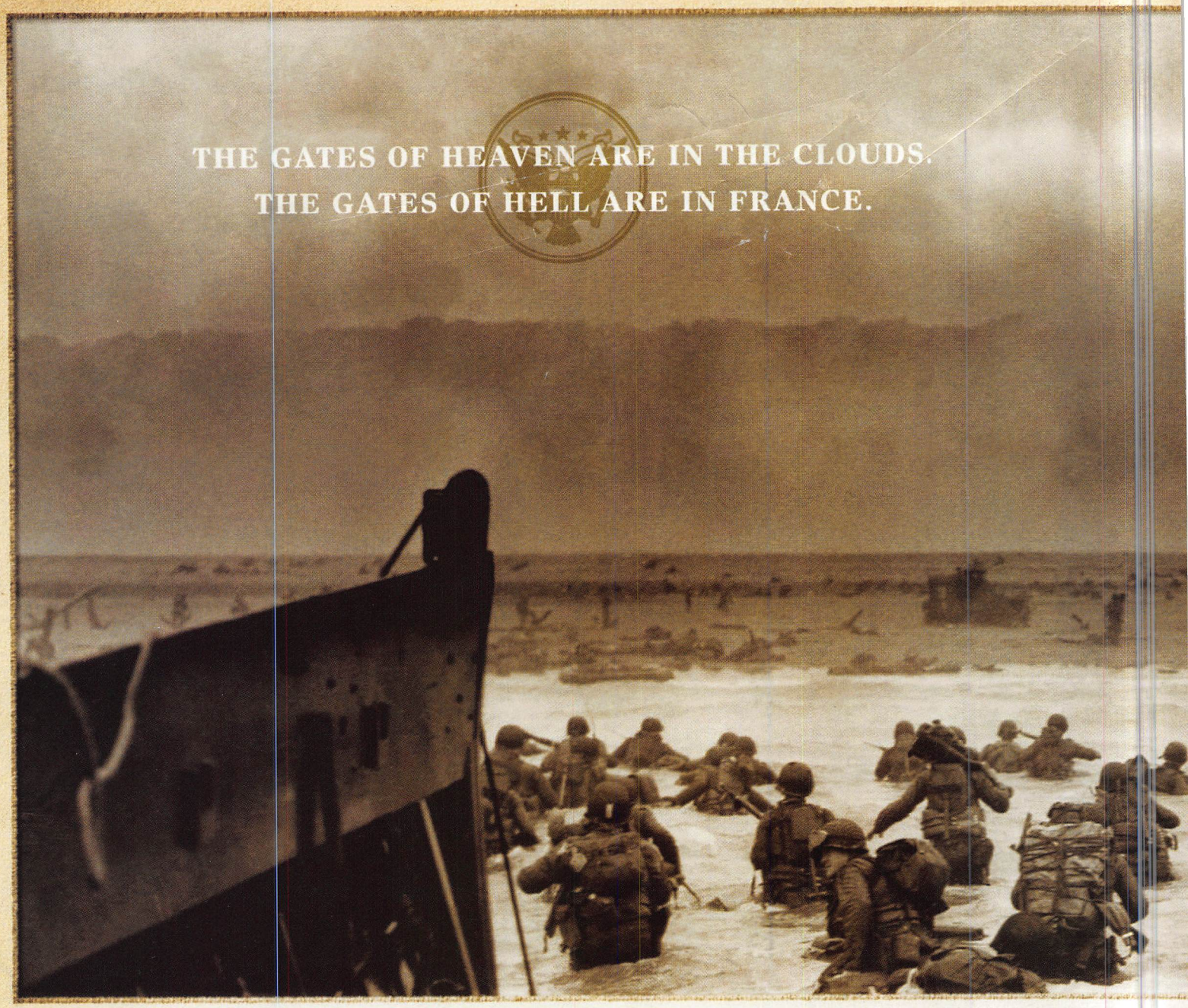


Traci Torpedoes, our favorite Freaky Flyer

play games

review legend

perfect
stellar
great
good
average
poor

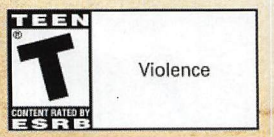








And when he gets to Heaven, to St. Peter he will tell. One more soldier reporting, sir. I've served my time in Hell.





PlayStation.2

MEDAL OF HONOR ALLIED ASSAULT AVAILABLE ON PC.



★ ★ ★ ★ *June 6th 0600 hours. Omaha Beach. D-day.*

After three years of enemy occupation, the journey to take back France will be perilous. Beware. If the hypothermia, underwater mines and Belgian Gates don't kill you, there will be plenty of Nazis awaiting your arrival only too glad to help finish the job. Godspeed, soldier. Save yourself. Save France. Then save the world. Enlist at *moh.ea.com*

MEDAL OF HONOR FRONTLINE

YOU DON'T PLAY, YOU VOLUNTEER.

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THEY BE JAMMIN'

After a decade-long hiatus, ToeJam and Earl return to Funkify Earth, one more time...

words dave halverson





We



don't frolic enough anymore. We're either too busy blasting the flesh tones out of attacking hordes or forging ahead, unraveling complex missions ops and diabolical schemes. True, *ToeJam and Earl: Mission to Earth* does contain all of the above, but it does so in a way that just...well, makes you smile, or want to fart in public. So let's have a look-see at what this long-awaited sequel is really all about. A quick refresher for the uninitiated: ToeJam and Earl got started back in the early nineties, when two white guys with funk on the side (Mark Voorsanger and Greg Johnson) pitched then-hardware-giant Sega a peculiar new game idea involving two spaced-out aliens and their adventures on Earth. It presented, among other things, presents as a catalyst for the gameplay, randomly generated levels, risqué sexuality, and above all humor, be it toilet, satirical or otherwise. The first game, an overhead adventure/exploration game, laid the foundation for the sequel, a truly funkadelic side-scroller blazing with color and two-deep gameplay.

Since, the series has lain dormant, tucked away in the vast resources of Sega's bursting at the seams franchise vault. Rumors of a third *TJ&E* flared up around the Saturn and Dreamcast, but the user base for each never reached sufficient saturation to green light such a unique brand, I suppose. So here we are in 2002, Sega's finished with the hardware business, and the long awaited new sequel is coming our way on a Microsoft console... Not even Miss Cleo (wherever she is) could have seen that one coming. While the wait has been long and arduous, it has also been for the best (easy to say now that I'm playing it) as time has been kind to the concept. For a game forged on funk that came up during the height of metal supremacy and the threat of a techno invasion, *TJ&E* sure has landed on its feet (all 7 of them) a decade later. 40 full-length songs and several full-length rap videos in tow, what was once considered a square peg is now ripe for two market segments; the adults who were weaned on it, and newbies hungry for a little soul in their overly predictable game arsenals. Spreading a little extra frosting on their coming-out party cake, Big Earl and ToeJam have brought along a new gal-pal too, their home girl, Latisha, a spicy, feisty blue alien babe blessed with ample knockers, a couple antennae, and attitude to burn—let the Ebonics begin.

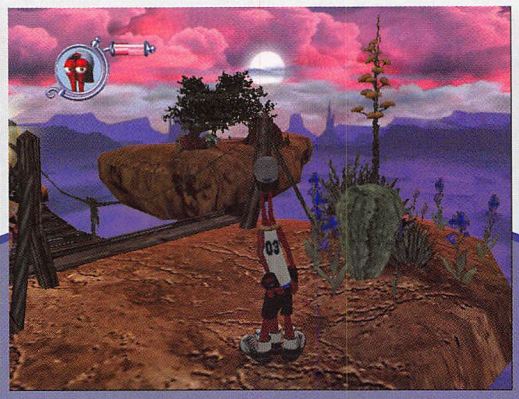
So what are three aliens from Funkotron doing here in the first place? They've been sent by the Great Funkopotamous to retrieve the 12 sacred albums of funk which have been stolen by some very unfunky Earthlings. The 12 vinyls are the source of all funk in the known universe, and if they get too much dirt on 'em they'll loose their vital Funk Essence. So, you can sense the urgency... Complicating matters, the usually dysfunctional (heard that) Earthlings have been made unusually destructive by the mysterious figure known as Anti-Funk. As ToeJam, Big Earl, and Latisha seek the licorice pizzas, cleverly disguised Funkotranian agents will help them unravel the real mystery behind a present from the dark side of the funk, and just what the funk Anti-Funk is trying to pull.

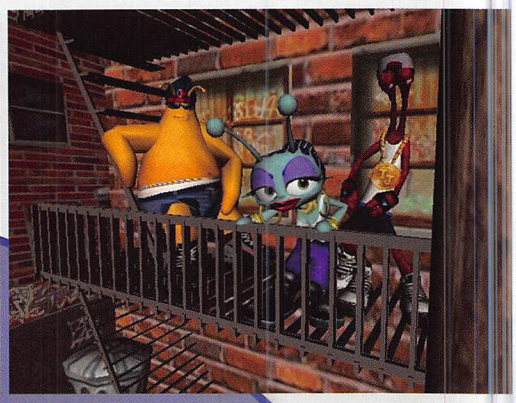
The gist of the gameplay revolves around converting Earthlings (by pelting them) and collecting

"THE 12 SACRED ALBUMS OF FUNK, THE SOURCE OF ALL FUNK IN THE KNOWN UNIVERSE, HAVE BEEN STOLEN BY SOME VERY UNFUNKY EARTHLINGS "









Above: Latisha gets down and funky.
To the right: ToeJam picks his butt.

keys, as you traverse each randomly generated zone, with the way and means for doing so providing the hook—a combination of dispensing presents, Funkify notes, and Funk-Fu. As a rule, an empty disco globe is a dangerous one. Above each Earthling's head floats the shiny, mirrored orb (the international symbol for gluttony, over indulgence, bad hair, bell bottoms and unprotected sex, made famous by Steve Rubell), which you'll need to fill-in to get the Earthlings on the same groove-thing as you. Once converted, Earthlings dispense presents, money, the odd bargain, and irreverent and/or hilarious dialogue, as you press your little black button to chat it up. Should ToeJam suggest that a cheerleader check out his third leg, he may hear "rah-rah, wish me luck, come by if you wanna..." or "nobody touches these pom-poms except for me and my boyfriend." Hehe, only on Xbox. Well, for now at least. ToeJam, Earl, and Latisha begin the game with Yellow belts and as they amass points by converting humans, earn promotions dispensed by a wise man, which happens to be a big human carrot—alrighty. With each belt comes a title: orange gets you to dufus, purple to peanut, blue to bro... you get the gist. Your Funk-Fu blast matches your belt color, so if you hit an Earthling to no avail, you'll notice a colored aura signifying the level you'll need to bring down him, her, or it, with a simple Funk Fu blast. And here's where the game begins to take shape early on. There are many ways to convert stronger opponents, ranging from a first-person Funkify shot out of your Boom Box (which utilizes Funkify notes you earn by chasing them down) to using any number of presents like the Funk Fu Blast; or (if the proper power-up is in the vicinity) dancing them into submission. Following a set button groove, a tiny platform appears under the opponent(s) (depending on your belt, you can attract any number of Earthlings) and the better you groove, the quicker they lose. You haven't lived until you've witnessed three Medusa babies, a construction worker, and a cowboy, dancing to the funky beats. It's like *Grease* on LSD. Figuring in each character's attributes, this and every other aesthetic of the game takes on a slightly different complexion. ToeJam has increased shot range and power, increased speed, greater jump distance, good luck with money presents, and gets a two-buck rebate at mailboxes; Big Earl has more powerful Funk Fu, a bigger life bar, loves all food, and gets two for one at the sushi bar; and Latisha has double funk rhythm power, gets double stuff trick or treating, runs half the risk with risky presents, and can ride tornados. Then there are the presents themselves, a vast collection which you must continually unlock as you progress throughout your quest for vinyl. There are presents for converting Earthlings, presents for bucks and rank, for protection and escape, movement, food and life, bad presents (like the tin of mystery food you get from your aunt every Christmas), general presents, map-related presents, super presents and a few I won't even try to explain. From the Funkmobile (oh, these are cool) to the Chill-Out Megaphone, each is individually wrapped for your gaming pleasure. Underneath all of this wackiness lies layer upon layer of nuances—different aspects of the game, and the way it can be played, that each player will forge in his or her own special way, making *TJ&E* a truly unforgettable, personal experience.

"YOU HAVEN'T LIVED UNTIL YOU'VE WITNESSED THREE MEDUSA BABIES DANCING"

Of course, all of this is wrapped in rap, hip-hop and funk, and produced by Scott Patterson, Executive VP at one of America's leading development houses; Visual Concepts, and ToeJam & Earl Productions. Nothing about *Mission to Earth* is contrived, forced, ill-thought out or cheesy. On the contrary, *TJ&E* co-creator Mark Voorsanger gets his inspiration from legendary anime producer Miyazaki, just one indication why the game plays as great as it looks. Which brings me to the inevitable proclamation that *Mission to Earth* is without a doubt one of the most visually stunning video games ever created; there is some serious eye-candy at work here. A look up depicts the best clouds ever, a look out, the best trees, and a look down, textures from the gods. Not to mention silky smooth water falls, dynamic lighting, real-time time passage, stellar animation, and level design bursting at the seams with the kind of hip exaggeration that makes you want to skip potty breaks. Harkening back to the original, and I know it's beyond cliché to say, I still can't believe the state of today's visuals. We are so lucky to have games like this.

VC's Robert Leyland explains the passage of time: "We wanted to show the passage of time in a way that would give the world a more dynamic sense of surrealism. We move the Sun rapidly across the sky throwing shadows across the world during the course of the day. Then at night, we bring up the moon and cast moon shadows in a similar way." And when he says bring up the moon, well, you'll see. The gameplay changes accordingly, becoming increasingly harder at night. Earthlings fall asleep (so fun to sneak up and scare), but Ghosts and Boogiemen hunt you down ruthlessly. On the flip side, hidden areas on the map, highlighted by sprinkles of light, become easier to see at night. The overall effect is best experienced by parking it under a tree and watching the shadow melt over you as the sun moves across the sky. To say this game is beautiful would be an understatement.

As I began playing the preview disc, with the express purpose of getting a feel for the game (of which certain key elements were not in place), what started as a fascination quickly grew into an addiction until I finally had to force myself to quit. Once it streets, I can't imagine how anyone will be able to put it down. When all is said, done, and implemented, *Mission to Earth* will boast boss or "Gate Battles," a character switching platform at each of the five zone hubs, missions and side-quests, present combos, and with a little luck, extra Boom Box Weapons. In other words, depth and diversity of funkadelic proportions. The Gate







"RAH-RAH, WISH ME LUCK, COME BY IF YOU WANNA'..."
—TOKEN CHEERLEADER

Battles can only be unlocked by collecting the requisite Karaoke Microphones and must be completed before entering the next zone. Completing missions and quests for various Earthlings you encounter will enable you to unlock presents and gain access to new areas. Unlike the many mini-games you find throughout the adventure, which allow you unlimited tries without losing your stuff, in Gate Battles you can die, and extinguished resources are lost, so don't forget to save! Of the game's laundry list of bells and whistles, what I am most fond of, and a huge proponent of, is downloadable content. Via a dude named Ahnuld (that name is tentative, I'm telling you) who hangs out on the zone hubs, online patrons may be able to access a menu of downloadable levels, which cost bucks to access but reward savvy gamers with Super Presents and stuff to bring back into the game. During our roundtable at VC there was also talk of a downloadable new character, although it's unknown whether time will allow for this or not. How far VC goes with the extras relies somewhat on sales, so if you really want the goods, buy two copies.

And finally (well, not really, I just need to wrap up), for readers of **play**—also known as "hardcore users"—you know who you are: smart, good looking, tired—there exist very high-key-entry doorways. You don't need to access these to beat the game but should you choose to clean this puppy out, top to bottom, they will offer unique rewards. And so there you have it, the official, exclusive first "hands-on" preview of the beloved *ToeJam and Earl* sequel. Thank you for playing.

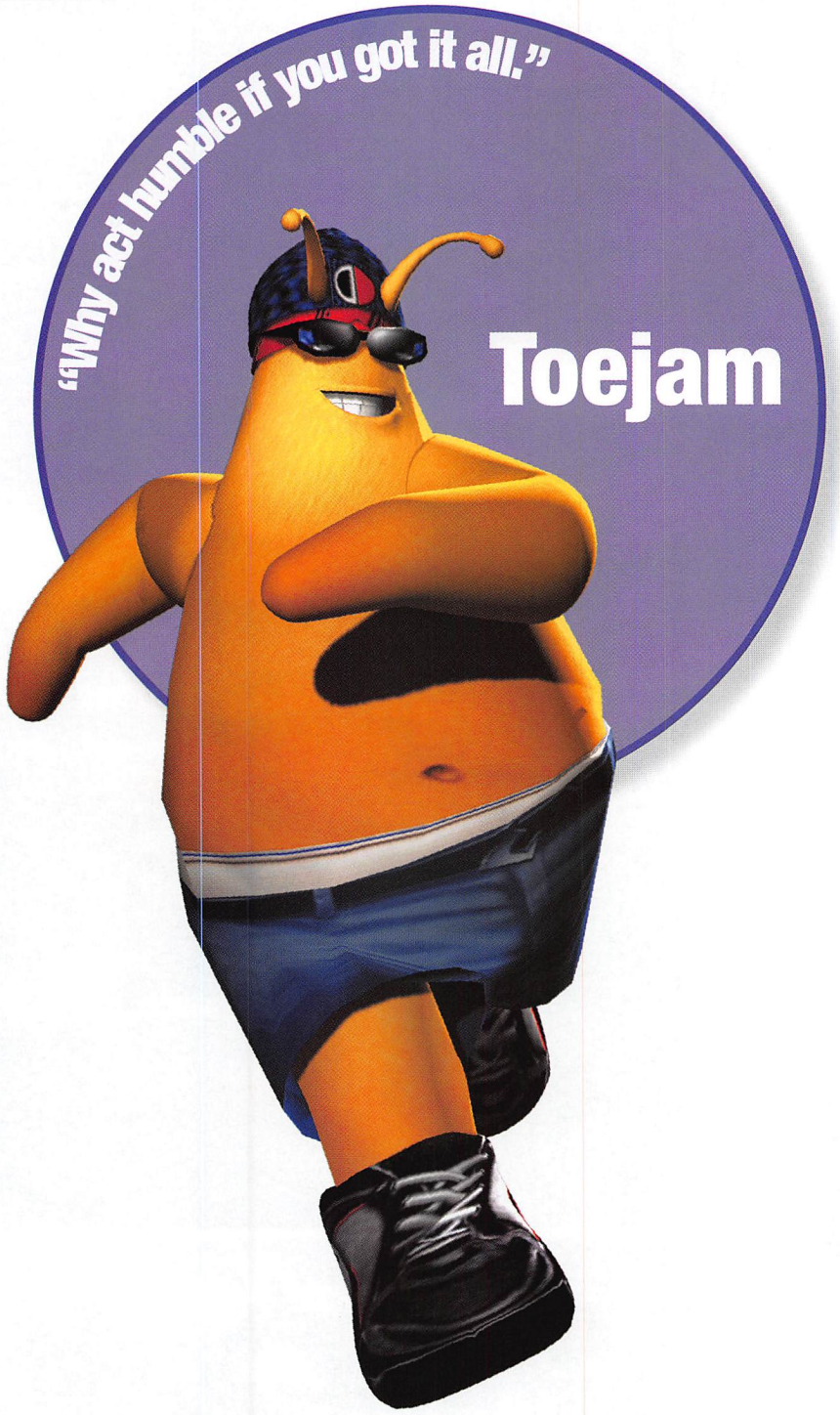


When was the last time you saw a scene like this in a video game? Never? Exactly.

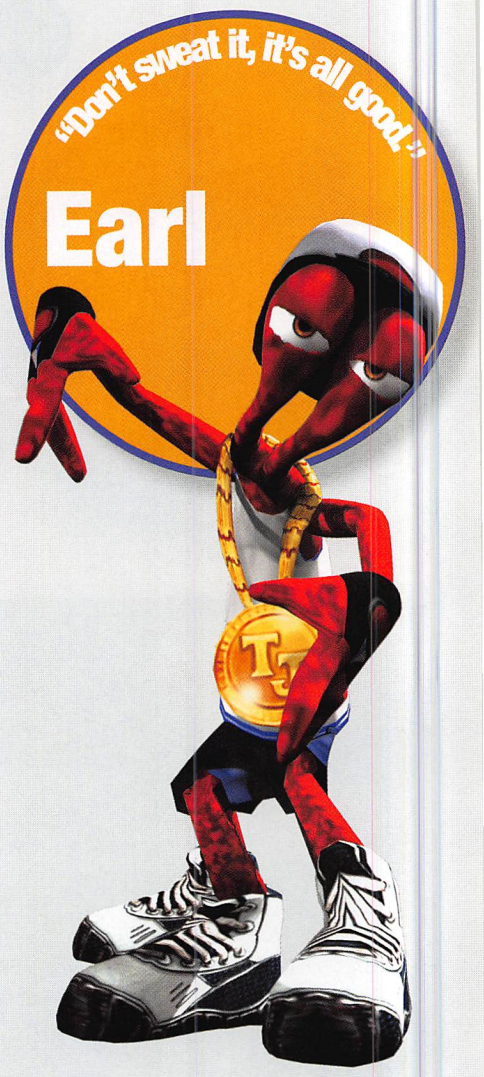




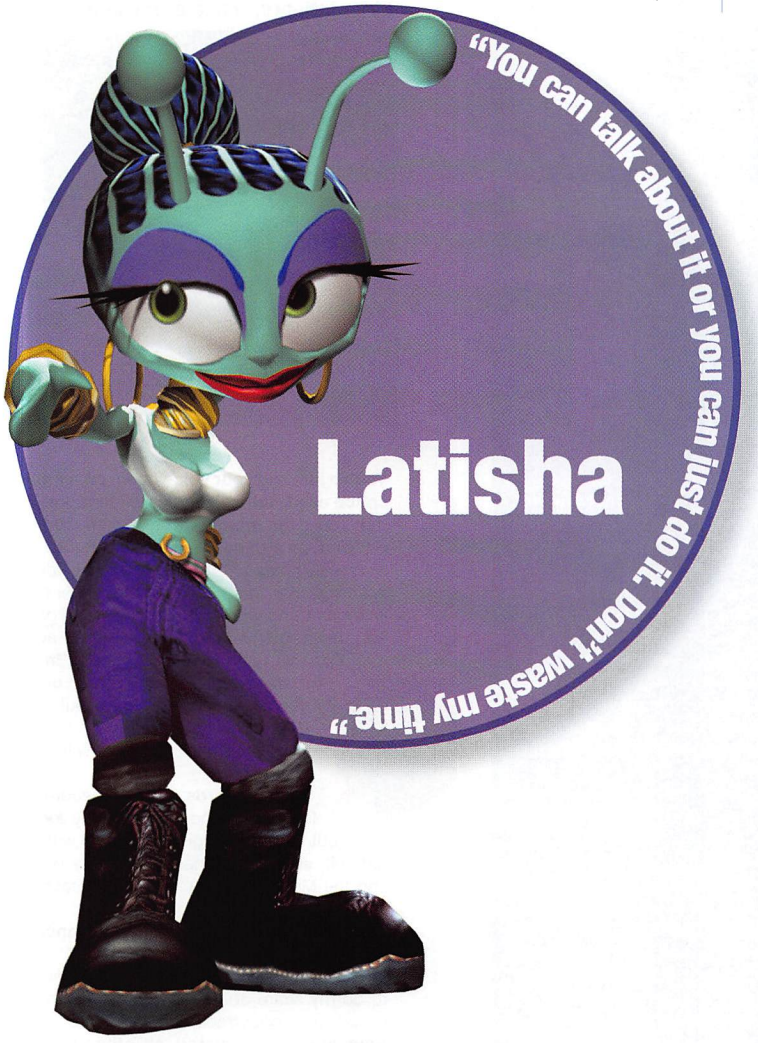
THE STARS

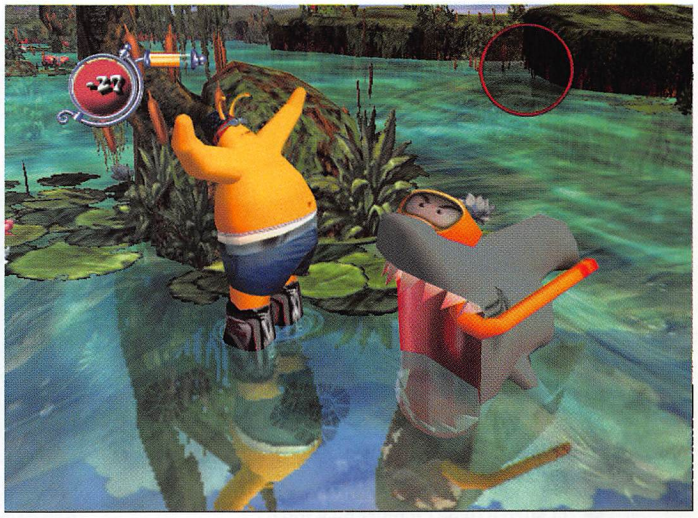


ToeJam is feared and admired by all other rappers, desired by all the hottest ladies of Funkotron, and looked up to by all as a leader and role model… in his dreams. The truth is that TJ's natural abilities are considerable, but they are nothing compared to his self-confidence, which is about the size of a planet…and that's on a bad day. ToeJam is blessed with the double gift of talking big, and believing everything he says. His biggest dream is to have a girlfriend. Any girlfriend. Which is to say, in TJ's view of things, he just hasn't picked one yet. ToeJam knows, without any doubt, that the best way to win a girl over is to wear her down with his sharp and irresistible wit, overwhelm her with his raw, undiluted charm, and impress her with his third leg. (What?! He has three legs.) ToeJam's latest goal in life is to get Latisha to admit that she is madly in love with him. Or in lust with him. Either one would do. TJ's family owns a small café on Funkotron called Café Funkolicious, and TJ is the youngest of 12 siblings, all of whom are very practiced at ignoring him. Unlike the others, ToeJam was raised mostly by his Grandmother, who always called him 'Special Baby.' His great claim to fame was when he 'borrowed' the Righteous Rapmaster Rocketship and went on a joyride with his homeboy Big Earl to planet Earth. This occurred in a period of Funkotronian history sometimes referred to as 'Game One.' TJ got in a little trouble, and ended up leading some of the unfunky Earthlings back to Funkotron. But at the end of the day, he and Earl saved the planet and provided some good entertainment value for the Funkotronians. So Lamont, source of all funk in the known Universe and leader of Planet Funkotron, gave ToeJam and Earl the Rapmaster Rocket Ship as a reward. Earl is ToeJam's closest friend. He's the only one TJ doesn't bother trying to impress, since he knows Big E will always be there to back him up.



Big Earl never gives a moment's thought to how cool he is. He is simply Big E, and he doesn't sweat the small stuff. In fact, Big Earl don't sweat nothin'… He just takes it as it comes, at his own laid back pace, and in his cool, good-natured way he manages to enjoy just about everything. Big Earl has never had a bad thought about anybody in his whole Earl-life. He is just about the only one on Funkotron who can put up with ToeJam on a daily basis, and while others might not understand it, he really looks up to ToeJam. Big Earl comes from a poor family and has a little sister named Sharice, whom he calls 'Cricket.' He takes good care of her and is very protective of her. Big Earl grew up next door to ToeJam and has been his homeboy since nursery school. Earl could Rap before he could talk. His first words were, 'Yo, What Up?.' Between nap times, he and TJ used to put on rap performances in the alley behind the nursery school. Big E would set his bottle aside and break it down to some serious funk. As Earl got older, he got used to hanging out at Café Funkolicious with TJ, where he refined his eating techniques to a true art. When Earl was in high school, he had a girlfriend who got into some gang trouble. Earl arrived on the scene but was too late to save her. He got hauled off with the whole gang, even though he hadn't done anything wrong, and had to do some time. At that point, Earl didn't care what happened to him as he was too overcome with guilt. After that, Earl fell in with a bad crowd and didn't see ToeJam for a while. Eventually, he came 'round to his old self, but ever since then Earl has stayed away from women, feeling deep down inside like he might not be able to protect them when they need him most. Earl seems innocent, but he has been around the block. In this respect, he is similar to Latisha, but less vocal. He has a mountain of respect for Latisha, and thinks of her as his 'other sister.'







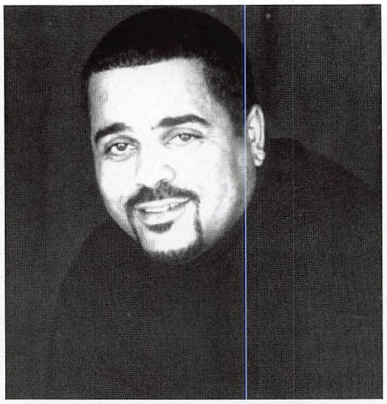
Latisha has a long history of guys trying to put the moves on her. One thing they all learn is that no one, and that means no one, messes with Latisha. In addition to having a sharp mind, she is also blessed with a hot bod and a wicked sense of rhythm. Latisha can bust out some moves like nobody's business, and she has that special grace of someone who never worries about what other people think. Latisha comes from a very wealthy family, but no one, not even TJ and Earl, are aware of this. It's Latisha's secret. When Latisha's parents put the pressure on for her to toe the straight and narrow, she told them to take a hike, and headed uptown into the hood to get lost. One night at a dance club, she gave some thugs an earful and found herself in over her head. Spotting ToeJam & Big Earl, she put on an act, pretending to be tight with them, hoping the thugs would leave her alone. At one point, she threw herself at ToeJam and gave him a big, long kiss. So far, this has been far and away the high point of ToeJam's life. Earl clued in to what was going on and played along, but ToeJam, along with the thugs, totally bought it. Ever since then, he's been convinced that she's trying hard to resist her burning desires for him, and he figures it's just a matter of time before she breaks down. After the night in the club, Latisha continued to hang with TJ and Big E, but was never really sure why. Maybe it's because Big E is about the only guy who never tried to make a move on her, or maybe it's just that she finds being around him very comforting. The truth that even Latisha doesn't know is that, down inside, she's falling in love with Earl. In an odd way, she has even grown to like ToeJam and all of his annoying but harmless attention. Latisha has a sharp wit, as does ToeJam, and although she'd never admit it, she enjoys being challenged by him and would miss him if he wasn't around.



Latisha doesn't look too excited to see ToeJam. Truth be told, she'd like to crack him on the head... if he had one.

THE VOICE

G-Nutt, voice of Big Earl



You've just laid your voice down on a freaky space alien. Tell us, in your wildest dreams, did you ever imagine your voice coming out of such a thing? It must be a thrill.
Exactly, I never imagined such a thing, I've always wanted to. It was a trip to see how they brought it all together and brought it alive, I didn't know how it was gonna be while I was recording.



Did you have to learn to speak in the urban style of the character or did you already possess the skills?
This way of speaking is pretty natural, especially for a rapper. Once I saw what they wanted, it was easy.

In your words, who is Earl?
Earl is a phat, funky, rappin' alien. He's cool. He's laid back. He's real. Fact, he's laid back like me.

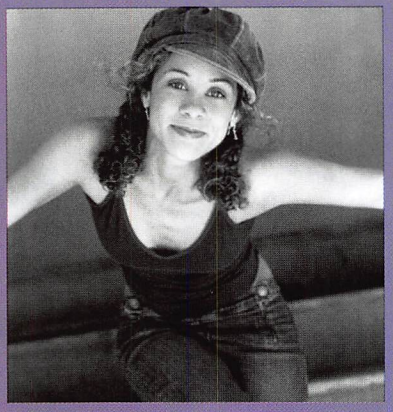
Were your lines all prepared in advance or did you get to improvise?
Mostly they were prepared in advance, but I did change 'em here and there when I thought it would sound more real. For example at one point Earl was s'posed to say "I think you knocked him right out, and I changed it to 'You knocked him smooth out.' Just keeping it real, you know. And when it came to all of the call outs in the Rap song, that was just freeform stuff. That all just comes naturally.

Anything game related or otherwise we should look (or listen) for you in, in the months ahead?
No not yet. But I do have two albums out with my group DenGee. *Fac Not Fiction* (1998) and *DenGee Livin'* (2000). If you want to check out a music video of one of our songs, here's a link: www.blastro.com/musicvideos/artists/DenGee+featuring+Silk-E.html

Gamers everywhere thank you; you are truly funkified, and have become a part of our wacky tribe.
True, true, true.

If you had one word of advise to give all the gamers out there who aspire to the innate Funkitude of Big Earl what advise would you give them?
Take it slow.

Sherrie Jackson, voice of Latisha



You've just laid your voice down on a freaky space alien. Tell us, in your wildest dreams did you ever imagine your voice coming out of such a thing? It must be a thrill.
I have to say, it was pretty wild seeing my voice coming out of a little blue alien with antennas but Latisha is definitely the coolest character that I've lent my voice to yet. It was really exciting to see the game and the characters come to life like that.



Did you have to learn to speak in the urban style of the character or did you already possess the skills?
Fortunately, I grew up in an urban area of New Orleans, Louisiana so I already had the dialect down. It's funny because most of the time when you do voice-over work you have to try to lose your accent; it was nice to finally let it all hang out!

In your words, who is Latisha?
Latisha is a funky, no nonsense, in your face, butt kicking, no ToeJam liking, "oh no you didn't," out to save the universe alien with an attitude! (Did I mention she's pretty cute too?)

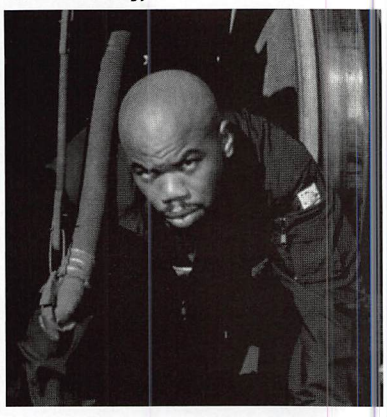
Were your lines all prepared in advance or did you get to improvise?
Most of the lines were scripted out for us but we were allowed to add our own style and flava here and there. Ya know what I'm sayin?

Anything game related or otherwise we should look (or listen) for you in, in the months ahead?
You can also catch me as one of the lead voices in the new Britney spears video game, *Britney's Dance Beat*! Oh and I just finished hosting a pilot for a new dance show called "Remix," so be on the lookout for me!

Gamers everywhere thank you; you are truly funkified, and have become a part of our wacky tribe.
Sit back, buckle up and enjoy the ride, you ain't seen nothin' like this before! See you on Funkotron baby. Thanks for playin'.

If you had one word of advise to give all the gamers out there who aspire to the innate Funkitude of Latisha what advise would you give them?
"Stay real and keep the funk alive!"

Kirk McHenry, voice of ToeJam



You've just laid your voice down on a freaky space alien. Tell us, in your wildest dreams did you ever imagine your voice coming out of such a thing? It must be a thrill.
I never thought I would ever be doing anything like this. The whole experience was great and when I actually saw the game and heard my voice, I was blown away.



Did you have to learn to speak in the urban style of the character or did you already possess the skills?
No. This all came very natural. It was like talking with my homeboys.

In your words, who is ToeJam?
ToeJam is a good guy on the inside, but he's like the guy in the club with the old suit, shirt unbuttoned to his belly button and the Mr. T starter kit. The presentation is all wrong.

Were your lines all prepared in advance or did you get to improvise?
All the lines were already written, but I did get to do my share of improvising. They should include a blooper track with the game.

Anything game related or otherwise we should look (or listen) for you in, in the months ahead?
Nothing else in the works right now as far as games go, but I'll always be willing to do this type of work again. It was a lot of fun. As far as other ways to look out for me, keep watching *Comic View* on BET cause you'll probably see me there again.

Gamers everywhere thank you; you are truly funkified, and have become a part of our wacky tribe.
I'm just really happy to have been a part of this. I hope everyone enjoys the game and I hope it helps bring out the funk in all of us.

If you had one word of advise to give all the gamers out there who aspire to the innate Funkitude of ToeJam, what advise would you give them?
Lay back an take notes and remember, let it happen naturally. You can't rush the funk. Peace.

Humble Beginnings







Ebert and Roeper the early days? Nah, it's ToeJam and Earl's two 16-bitters...



Genevieve Goings, various characters



What voice work did you do for TJ&E III?
I did about 9 or 10 different earthling characters in the game. These were: the wahini, the little girl, the little elf, the cheerleader, the medusa bay, the tourist, the fans, and several of the trick or treat voices. I also did the gospel singers and all of their singing. Oh, and some stand in work for Latisha.

Which was your favorite character to do, and which would you say is most like you?



I'd say my favorite to do was the definitely sexy wahini. The one that is most like me would have to be the gospel singers, because I'm a soul sister with a soul purpose.

You've just laid your voice down on a freaky space alien. Tell us, in your wildest dreams, did you ever imagine your voice coming out of such a thing? It must be a thrill.

A "thrill" is an understatement! I think this is such an awesome angle to vocal work.

Did you have to learn to speak in the urban style of the character or did you already possess the skills?
This was nothin. I'm an urban princess!

In your words, who are the "earthlings"?
The aliens from funkotron land on earth and the earthlings just get all up in their business. These people remind me of all those types of people out there who are living life angry and scared of change, with that inkling feeling that there's something more out there...They all have the funk buried deep inside though.

Were your lines all prepared in advance or did you get to improvise?
The lines were mostly written by the TJ&E team, but they were very open to me to putting my own style into things. At one point we had to come up with a bunch of racy lines. It was a kick. We did a lot of laughing together. When recording the gospel singer characters, the words were written but they let me just freak it however I wanted, and I got to layer the gospel lines with soul and harmonies!

Anything game related or otherwise we should look (or listen) for you in, in the months ahead?
I am so glad you asked! I sing with two music groups, one is a soulful, female hip-hop duo called Chemistry (www.Chemistrymusic.Com). With strong harmonies and a powerful message, we are taking the underground hip-hop scene by storm. We have shows nearly every weekend, and my partner, Cait-La-Dee, is the most amazing vocalist I have ever heard. Email us to get show updates!(Harmony@chemistrymusic.Com) My other group is a band called Legato, which is a downtempo, mellow jazz/hip-hop/neo-soul fusion over electronic beats and live instruments. My producer and I really developed a unique and diverse style with this poetic project. Both albums can be expected in late 2002. I also sing background vocals on various hip-hop/rap albums across the country, many of which are in stores now. (Mr.Kee, Furious, Cosmo, Gennessee, S-class and more)

If you had one word of advice to give to all the gamers out there who aspire to the innate funkitude of the characters, what advice would you give them?
#1. Music is the most effective ammunition we have. #2. Don't let anyone tell you that just because you're an alien, you can't take over the world. #3. Whatever you do, don't resist the funk.

Gamer's everywhere thank you; you are truly funkified, and have become apart of our wacky tribe.
And congratulations, you've won a trip to funkotron! (Courtesy of tj&e productions)

THE TECHNOLOGY

Passage of Time: Technical Overview

by Robert Leyland, Graphics Engineer–Visual Concepts

In *TJ&E*, we wanted to show the passage of time, in a way that would give the world a more dynamic sense of surrealism. We move the sun rapidly across the sky, throwing shadows across the world during the course of the day. Then at night we bring up the moon, and cast moon shadows in a similar way.

In gameplay terms, certain things become harder to do at night, and finding some things become easier. For example, at night, regular Earthlings fall asleep but Boogiemen and Ghosts appear to chase the player. When it is dark the landscape becomes harder to see, but the glow caused by hidden objects is easier to spot.

In technical terms, we light the world in several different Xbox vertex shaders, which are little pieces of code that run inside the front end of the graphics processor. These shaders adjust the brightness and coloring of the world to indicate the time of day from reddish dawn to full noon, and sliver blue midnight.

Furthermore we animate the sky, and the ambient lighting of the world, with moving clouds, wind driven animation of trees and bushes, starry nights etc. to heighten the dramatic effect.

To this we add shadows, which are created through a Xbox feature called a shadow buffer. To do this we create a camera positioned in line with the sun (or moon), and take a snapshot of the world, recording how far from the sun, is each pixel in each object. Then, when we draw the world, a pixel shader (like a vertex shader, but in the back end of the graphics processor) compares the position of each pixel drawn to the corresponding position in the shadow buffer. If that pixel is further from the sun than the shadow buffer location, it is in shadow, otherwise it is fully lit.

By doing this operation continuously, at 60 frames per second, we can dynamically adjust shadows, as each leaf of a tree animates, and as the sun whips over the sky, bringing a touch of reality to the funky world of ToeJam and Earl.

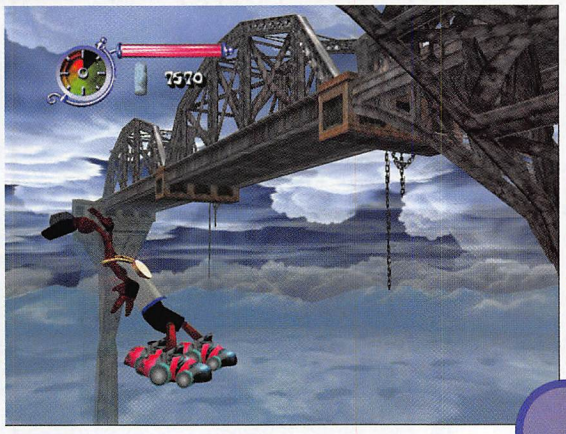


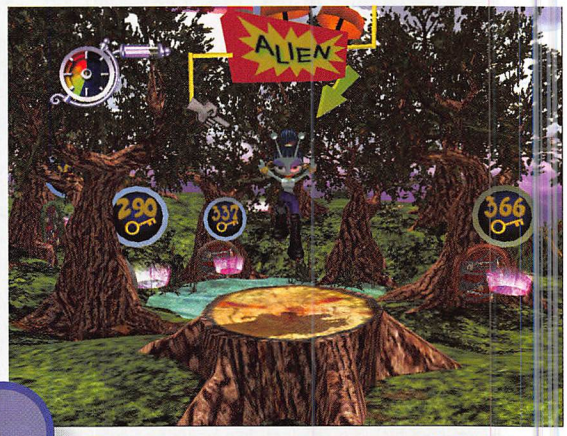


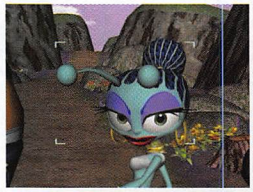


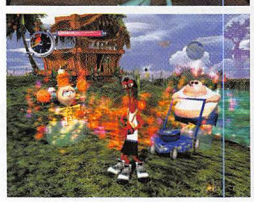


Above: ToeJam has activated an invisible bridge. To the right, he's not so lucky.



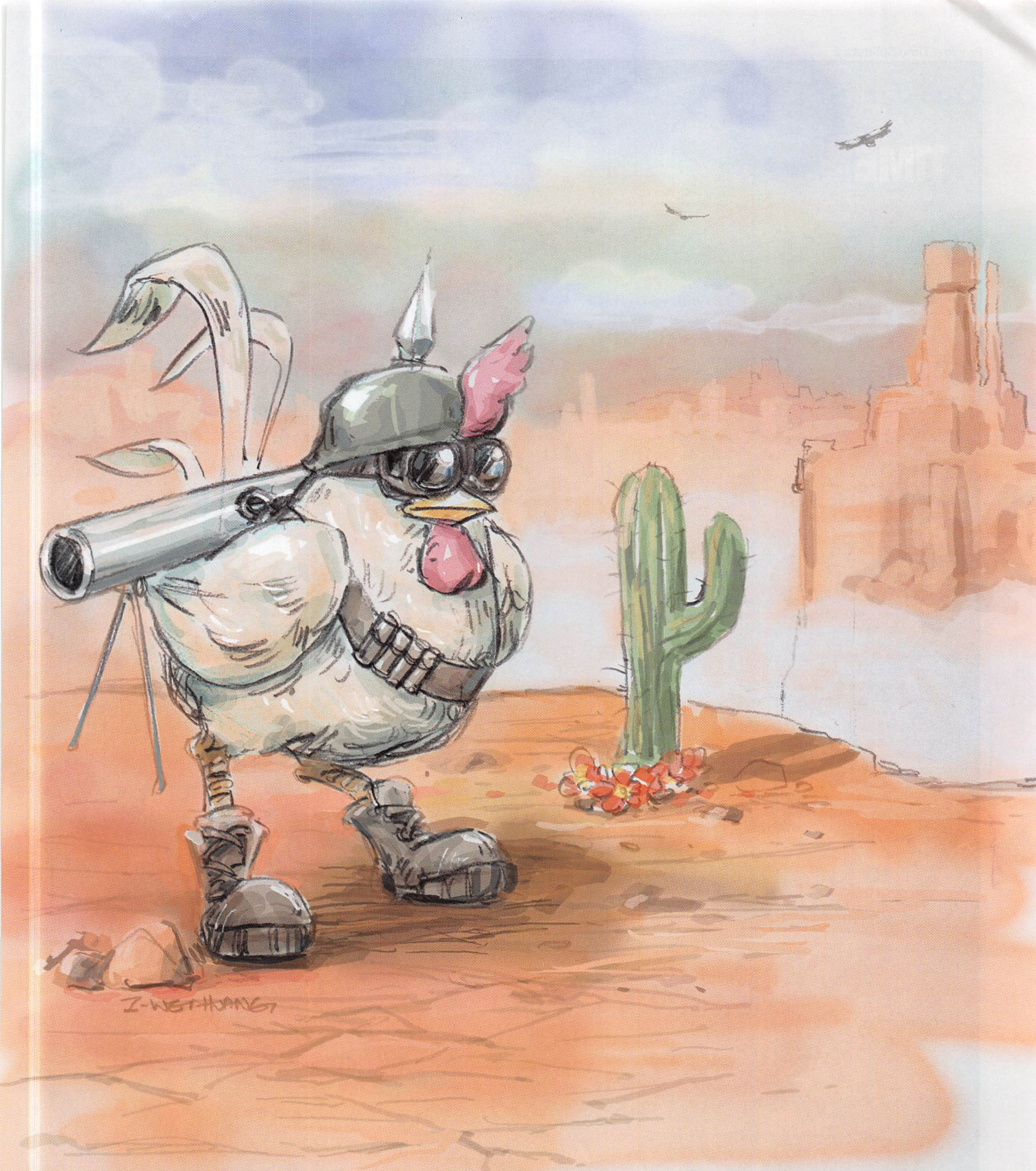












XB

ToeJam & Earl: Mission to Earth

preview

developer: **visual concepts/tj&e productions**
publisher: **sega**
available: **fall**

A feast of action, humor, shooting, and adventure gaming that never grows old, no matter how long you dine.

TIME FLIES...

Free Radical demonstrates how to make a first-person shooter smoke with awesome intensity



words brady fiechter

So here I am again, playing one of my most anticipated games of the year, confined to a single new level. Give me more!

This time around, I'm treated to a slickly stylized robot factory, where conveyers shuttle around parts and security bots, and exhaust ports belch flames from all the powerful machinery. Rows of robots line up along the walls, waiting for provocation, and the occasional giant peaks around the corners to unleash Armageddon. The action is fierce and the opposition aggressive, requiring the use of a skilled touch on the trigger and the constant movement of my robot hero (every theme-based area grants a new character to command).

After much enemy destruction and the occasional equipment sabotage, the level ends and my impression hasn't changed much since the last thrilling level I played, set in Siberia: awesome game.

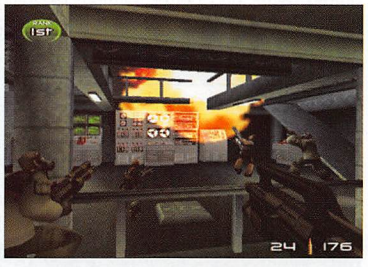
Patience, and appreciate the time the Free Radical team is devoting to making *Time Splitters 2* tower over their first effort.

Full of questions, I ask David Doak, leader of the project, to give me some insight into what's going on behind the scenes, and what to expect when the game does find my console—all levels intact.









This game just looks so damn cool in still shots; wait till it moves

"IF YOU PLAY ON HARD, IT WILL BREAK YOUR BALLS"

answered by David Doak

So you're back with *Time Splitters 2*. Was there ever any question about going through with a sequel?
When we started out, we didn't actually intend to make a series of games based on the brand. However, by the time we had finished *TS1*, we realized that we had created something which we felt was truly unique and refreshing. It's fair to say that we fell in love with the offbeat *TimeSplitters* universe and just couldn't resist expanding and improving it.

***Splitters 2* recalls the general style and feel of the first, but it seems remarkably more ambitious. What can you point to that really separates the two games?**
When we made *TS1*, we were building an engine, a game and a company all at the same time—resources and time were very tight! There wasn't a lot of opportunity for experimentation and refinement. The second iteration of the game engine allowed us to make a tremendous difference in terms of raw performance and technical improvements. However, that would mean nothing unless it can be translated into stuff which is actually tangible to the player. *TS2* looks lusher, more solid, and is much more cohesive. *TS1* set the style and we've spent the last two years refining it. Consequently, there's just a whole load more 'game' there.

In terms of size and scope, can you give a general idea of how much bigger this game is? The levels seem so much larger, and there just seems to be so much more to do.
I can't pull a number out of the air to quantify how much 'bigger' it is. There's certainly a whole lot more to do in the game both in terms of the depth of the single player and the range of the multiplayer.

What pleased you most about the first *TimeSplitters*? Are there certain elements that you felt you had to carry over to the sequel?
We set out to make a great multiplayer game against an ambitious deadline and I think we pulled it off. The sheer variety of characters and environments is something which we felt compelled to do again. The "Map Maker" was a unique feature for a console FPS and we've really beefed it up for *TS2*.

Gamers are quite excited to see what you're ultimately doing with *Splitters 2*. Any pressure?
Obviously, the level of interest that *TS2* has attracted brings pressure to deliver a great game. However, that's a good thing—our standards are very high and we're certainly not afraid of being put to the test.

Any major hurdles to still overcome?
Just the 'crunch' period that accompanies the final development of any game. As we move toward shipping the game, it just gets better and better as the final polish goes on—all the usual panics when things are slightly wrong and all the usual joy as people pull rabbits out of hats in those 'just in time' moments.

You chose to leave out the ability to jump. Many FPS games now employ the jump button. What's your reasoning?
We've always thought that jumping is more properly a third-person platform style thing. The implementations in a FPS are almost always poor and deathmatches can turn into ungainly pogo-ing contests.

The game plays extremely fast, it's full of high energy. Is this all about action?
Not always—in the single player game there are a number of stealthy episodes. The much improved AI has allowed us to create level designs and setups which have a greater variety of pace. Of course, the raw performance is still there for those times when players need a full on adrenaline rush!

Things get intense quickly. Are you making the game fairly challenging?
If you play on easy, it will gently entice you into a fun experience. If you play on hard, it will break your balls. The hardcore will always want a challenging experience and we'll give it to them, but I dislike the way that some FPS seem to willfully exclude the newbie player—there's something for everyone.

What's your design philosophy towards this genre? *Halo* introduced adventure and story so well, and scripted events are becoming big. Do you still gravitate toward the *Doom*/*Quake* template, where you run and gun, open a few doors and get the hell out?
Sorry? Didn't *GoldenEye* introduce adventure and story and scripted events quite a few years earlier. [Laughs] I think you'll find that *TS2* includes elements just as complex as some of the *Halo* showpieces.

Last time *TS1* comes up: Did you learn any good lessons from the game? I loved it, but wanted so much more of everything! Which seems to be the whole reasoning for

this sequel.
We learnt that while a lot of people were able to appreciate *TS1* for what it was—it still got knocked for being spartan in some respects—particularly the simplicity of the 'story' levels. We've taken that criticism to heart and really gone to town on the variety of objectives and scenarios in the single player game for *TS2*.

You've talked about the different time periods affecting the dynamic of play. Explain...
This stems from the variety of period weapons and also the feel that we wanted from the various levels. Eg. The 1990 Dam level has a measure of stealthy military 'spy-fi,' 1932 Chicago is prohibition gangster intrigue, the 2315 Robot Factory is a hot plasma fest, 1895 Notre Dame is creepy, crypt-period horror. There are also a number of objectives which involve NPC interaction—tailing, rescuing, protecting, etc.—that deepen the experience.

Where did you get the ideas for the cool enemy designs? They have stylized, synthetic luster that is quite unique—almost like a slick comic book universe.
Our character artists are extremely talented and very prolific. Since *TS1*, the models and the texturing have just gotten better and better. Without hesitation, I would say that *TS2* has the coolest range of characters ever seen in a video game. And there's a lot of them—over twice as many as *TS1*.

Is it difficult finding the balance between multi-player fun and a good single-player game? I find it frustrating when I get the sense that too much time was put into deathmatch, with the threat of compromising the design of the story mode. Both have their place, but perhaps the focus should go into one or the other. A game like *Medal of Honor* shows that there still is immense value to a traditional single-player FPS.
I don't think that you necessarily have to plump for just one

"...THERE ARE MANY MORE EQUALLY PERVERSE THRILLS IN TS2"

of the two. It's clearly a tricky target, but we're hoping that people will feel that *TS2* has got the single/multi-player balance just right. We've found that as we expanded the scope of the single-player game, a number of features could cross over nicely into the multiplayer levels (eg. fire based weapons/fixed guns, etc.).

You've kept the same engine, right? But what kind of visual touches are being applied to the game? You seem to be doing a lot more with texturing. Everything looks great.
It's the same engine, but there has been considerable optimization and reworking of key elements—particularly animation and rendering. From the start of the art asset creation, much more attention was paid to lighting and consistency in the backgrounds. Another major advance has been in the quality and variety of special fx—particles, explosions, glows, full-screen filters, etc. We've got all the pyrotechnics and the frame rate to make them shine.

Okay, gotta go back to *Splitters 1*—there's so much I liked about it. I loved the haunted house level and the one with the heavy Asian influences—the Chinese thugs rocked! Any personal favorites in this sequel?
At the moment, I have a penchant for pegging monkeys in the ass with crossbow bolts or trying to look up the skirts of some of the many lovely lady characters. I guarantee that there are many more equally perverse thrills in *TS2*!

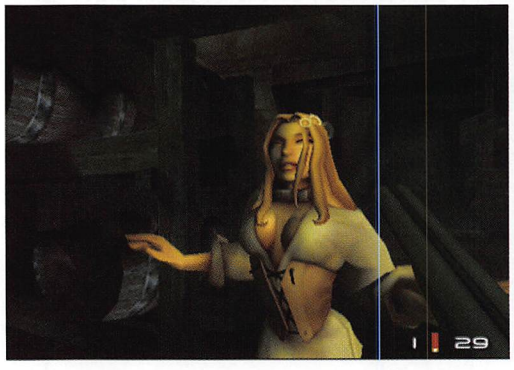
You have such variety in the game, especially in the countless enemies. When is enough, enough—if ever?
Enough is enough when you've got as many playable characters as *TS2*—jeez, I think we're pushing *Pokemon* levels!

All three versions look fairly identical. Any differences the trained eye might eventually notice? Personally, I

Love, love, love those character designs. Levels aren't so bad either: awesome lighting effects and greatly improved textures take this game well beyond the original











just love the feel of the PS2 version, so I've been locked into that one.
There are some hardware specific tweaks to the graphics engine and obviously the raw CPU speed differences will affect the performance in some heavily loaded multiplayer scenarios. But, really, we've gone for a uniformity over the three platforms. We're happy to leave the console advocacy to the platform zealots!

I'm still waiting for the entire version of the game! But here's to a *TimeSplitters 3*...
Well, keep your fingers crossed and say a little prayer every night before you go to bed...

What are you guys doing with the sound? Fairly basic mixing, all the usual sound effects? There's a lot left undone in this genre, lots of room for ambitious creativity—and 5.1 is always nice on Xbox.

[Graeme Norgate, in charge of TS2's sound and music design, chimes in] With the mission based levels, it's given me more opportunity to add subtle atmospherics towards the general feel of the game. There's a lot of layers of sound which won't get picked up on first play, but you'll gradually notice different aspects of it on repeat plays. I've carefully balanced this with suitably, over-the-top and tongue-in-cheek [effects] along with the rest of the game—i.e. the arcade section. In all-out deathmatch slugfests, it's in-your-face music and in-your-face sound effects—think of the original *TimeSplitters* audio turned up to 'eleven.' Oh, and there's over 140 different voices in this game... surely a record? **play**

"I WOULD SAY THAT TS2 HAS THE COOLEST RANGE OF CHARACTERS EVER SEEN IN A VIDEO GAME"



XB GC PS2

Time Splitters 2

preview

developer: **free radical**
publisher: **eidos**
available: **october**

Throwing out the bad and beefing up the good, Time Splitters 2 is a proper, awesome sequel.

MYSTIC RHYTHMS

Dynasty Warriors gets the anime treatment in Koei's spellbinding new action extravaganza

words dave halverson

The trouble with sealing away evil deities is that no matter what, they never seem to stay put. The Mystic Heroes retired one such family of tyrants, the very evil emperor Kang and his wife Sheva, long ago. By harnessing the power of the Dragon Star, which passes overhead only once a millennia, Kang has broken the seal, and taken possession of the Dragon Orb. He uses the life sucking ball of trouble to quickly summon minions, and then, feed off of the fear of all who come in contact with it, to expand his ghoulish army even further.

Koei no less then redefined action/fighting games with Dynasty Warriors for PS2 by putting an insane amount of characters onscreen and then handing players characters with enough dexterity to handle the onslaught. They have done the same thing here only in a more exaggerated anime inspired vein—to great effect. The four Mystic Warriors, whom work in tandem, are each outstanding game persona's in their own right. Lani is a powerful magic user; Tai is powerful all around but slow; Naja is powerful and fast, but possesses weak magic; and Shiga is an evenly balanced fighter. Each has specific attributes to build on, in both attackability and dexterity. Everything from Health and Magic to your Sword and Jump power can be built-up. They also, of course, all dispense hard core-chain attacks, juggling prey like rag dolls, as is the calling card of any good action game these days. The areas themselves have been tailored for more excitement as well; now smaller, and somewhat more concentrated, there's more to see, and do, and they contain legions of detailed enemy hordes, and one massive (and very nicely modeled) big bad boss, a welcome sight indeed. There's no denying Mystic Heroes has everything hard core actioner's desire, and perhaps then some.

"KOEI REDEFINED ACTION/FIGHTING WITH DYNASTY WARRIORS, AND THEY'VE DONE THE SAME THING HERE "

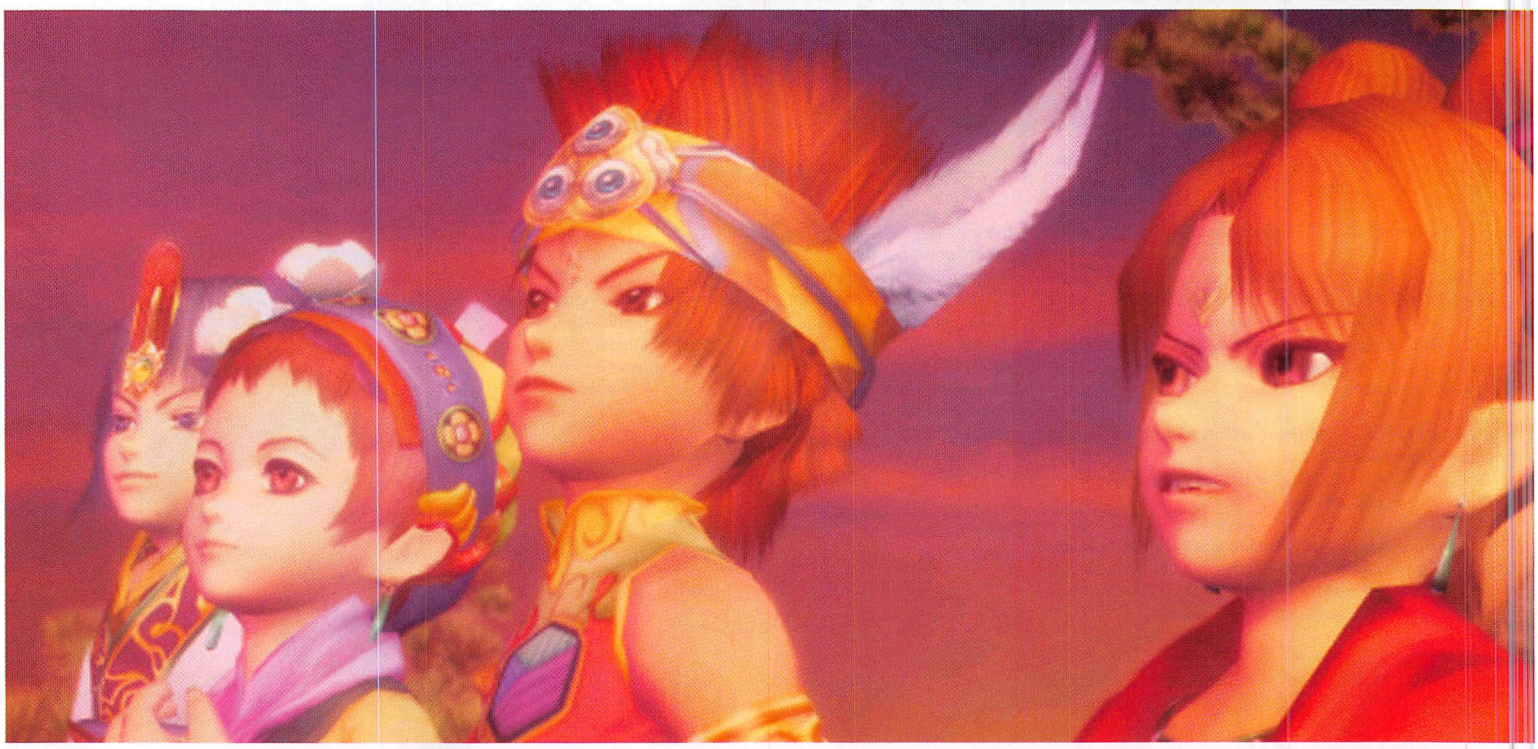






Big bosses and hordes of enemies highlight Koei's latest action title.





GC **Mystic Heroes** — preview

developer: **koei**
publisher: **koei**
available: **august**

Mystic Heroes improves on a theme that's already cemented as the pinnacle of pure action gaming

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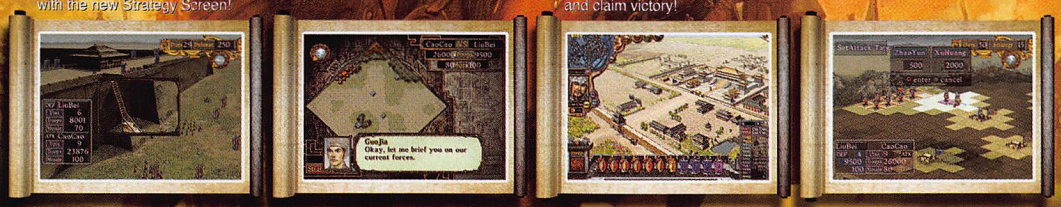
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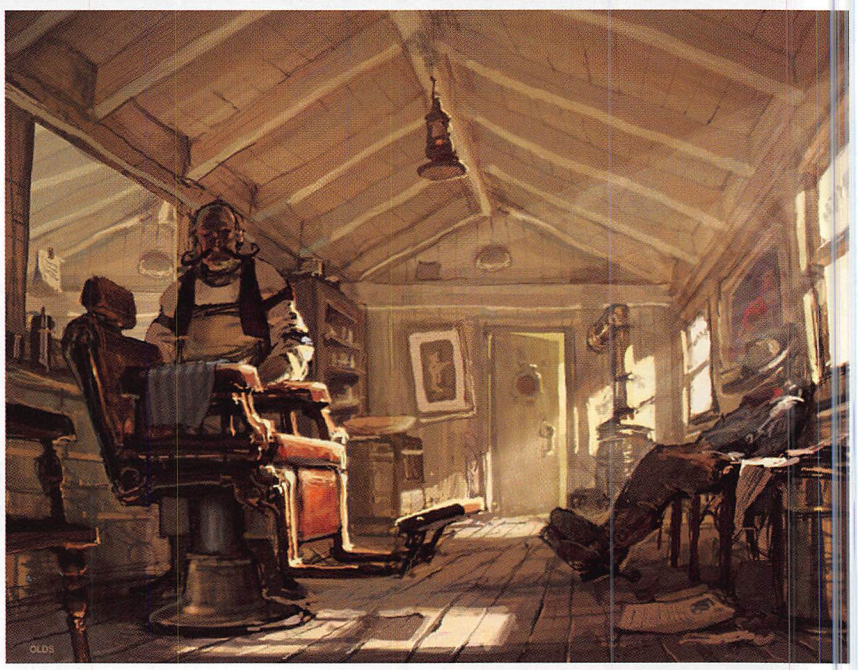
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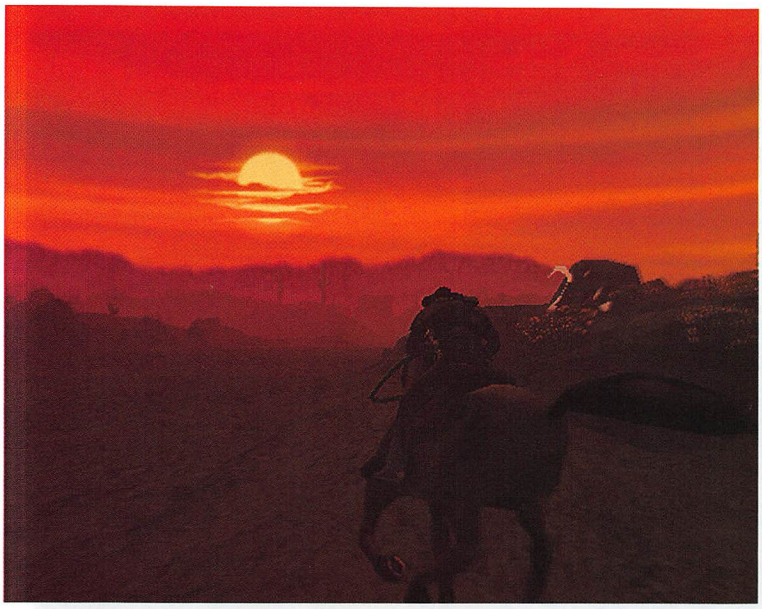
THE QUICK AND THE DEAD

The artisans at Capcom turn their sites on the wild-wild west. Have a look at the results and begin counting the days

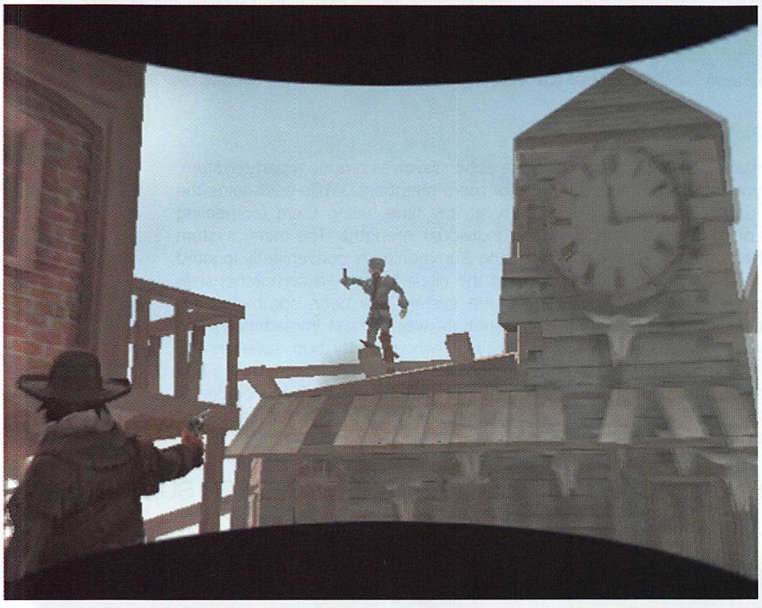
words dave halverson

It's a wonder there haven't been more games with old-west themes, given it was one of the most vile and gritty eras in American history (and everyone knows how much we love vile and gritty). Beyond *Sunset Riders, Dashin' Desperados*, and *Lucky Luke*, the well has been mighty dry. Those games were also created with a measure of exaggeration, so it can be said that *Red Dead Revolver* is the first hard-core old-west 3D action shooter—Yee-f---in-ha. In addition, it's from Capcom, so it's seriously down 'n' dirty. The dude doin' all the shootin'—Red, a hardcore gunslinger with a penchant for head wounds—traverses frontier towns, mine shafts, ghost towns and an old military fort essentially killing everything that moves in a manner that almost defies description. Red's kin were killed and left to die when he was just a bo. The sole survivor of his family, he was found and raised by Indians, and now he's out for some major









> "*RED DEAD REVOLVER* IS THE FIRST HARD-CORE OLD-WEST 3D ACTION SHOOTER"

payback. The resulting gameplay is so indicative of the raw nature of the circumstances, it's simply stunning to behold. This is partially due to the game's impeccable character models, which feature over a thousand animations, and the stunningly realistic-looking locales, awash with a dusty filmed quality. The gameplay runs deeper than meets the eye, with ample amounts of stealth, fighting on horseback, hand-to-hand combat, and complex AI that keeps you guessing with each and every type of enemy. The name of this game is pain, and it's dispensed without measure via pistols, shotguns, whips and, of course, TNT—coming your way just in time for a white and red Christmas, this winter.



A view to a kill: looks like Capcom has implemented yet another innovative targeting system



PS2 **Red Dead Revolver** **preview**

developer: **capcom**
publisher: **capcom**
avaialble: **fall**

Red Dead Revolver will surely clear the tumbleweeds out of the sparse action shooter genre

SUMMON HER TOO

THQ's *Summoner* sequel improves on the original in every way

words dave halverson



Maia, the lead character, pre-transformation

Although it was met with mixed reviews at best, *Summoner*, one of the first action-RPGs for the PlayStation 2, sold well, due to its in-depth story line and fantastical environments—at least what you could see of them. The game suffered from some of the worst draw distances ever and an odd combat system that had players pecking away at prey like a chicken on feed. Obviously taking this to heart, THQ and Volition have improved upon every aspect of the game, adding to what worked and fixing what didn't, presenting us with a sequel that is shaping up to be a quest well worth embarking on.

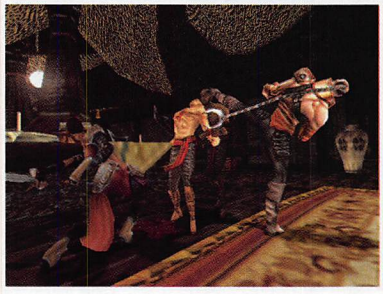
Technically, *Summoner 2* is nearly on par with the PS2's most elite adventures, and aside from its newfound visual stimuli, it's ablaze with compelling dialogue, a great story and excellent execution. I was quite taken aback by the opening sequence aboard a ship tossing at sea, under siege from a band of pirates. Slickly produced, awash with quality voice acting and, most of all, quite easy on the eyes, I double-checked the CD case just to make sure...yep, *Summoner 2*. Arriving at the game's first port, a beautiful beach, I was even more surprised. The shapely female models both look gorgeous, and looking out to sea, I was, like, whoa—and hey, I can see pretty far. Okay, so the game looks great; time to move on to the gameplay. *Summoner 2*'s action revolves around a party system, in which you are accompanied by one or more members. While each joins the fray, you can toggle through your party at any time, using them for healing purposes or to take advantage of their individual strengths. The menu system used for Necromancy, Potions, Scrolls, and Summoning is conveniently located on the D-pad and assigns commands to the circle button—a comprehensive, easy-to-use interface. Moreover, the battle system has been completely re-worked and nicely done at that. Soon enough (well, almost immediately), the main character, Maia, the Queen of Halassar (who's pretty hot), receives the power to Summon, mutating in a sea of light into a massive creature—the first taste of the game's biggest hook, the power to transform and seriously bludgeon the enemy. Then and there, I became officially intrigued by this surprising and rather unexpected sequel.

"I DOUBLE-CHECKED THE DISC TO MAKE SURE...YEP, SUMMONER 2"









These leash laws are getting ridiculous...

PS2 **Summoner 2** — preview

developer: **volition**
publisher: **thq**
available: **fall**

Reworked in every way imaginable, Summoner seems to be emerging a better game in every way.



DYNASTY WARRIORS

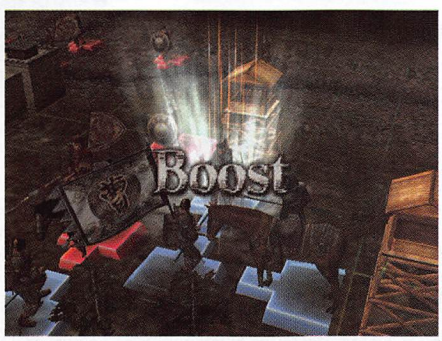
Koei takes their tried and true formula and applies it to a tactical combat game

words michael hobbs









Ancient Chinese history and tactical combat. A suprisingly good combination.

Koei continues to develop and expand upon their rather unique niche in the gaming world, being most well known for their historical combat games like *Nobunaga's Ambition*, *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, and more recently, *Kessen*.

Like nearly every Koei game, *Dynasty Tactics* gets its world and characters from history. In this case, it is the history of China, specifically a period between 194 and 220 A.D. This is the same time frame in which *Dynasty Warriors* and *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* is set, and you will of course recognize characters across these games.

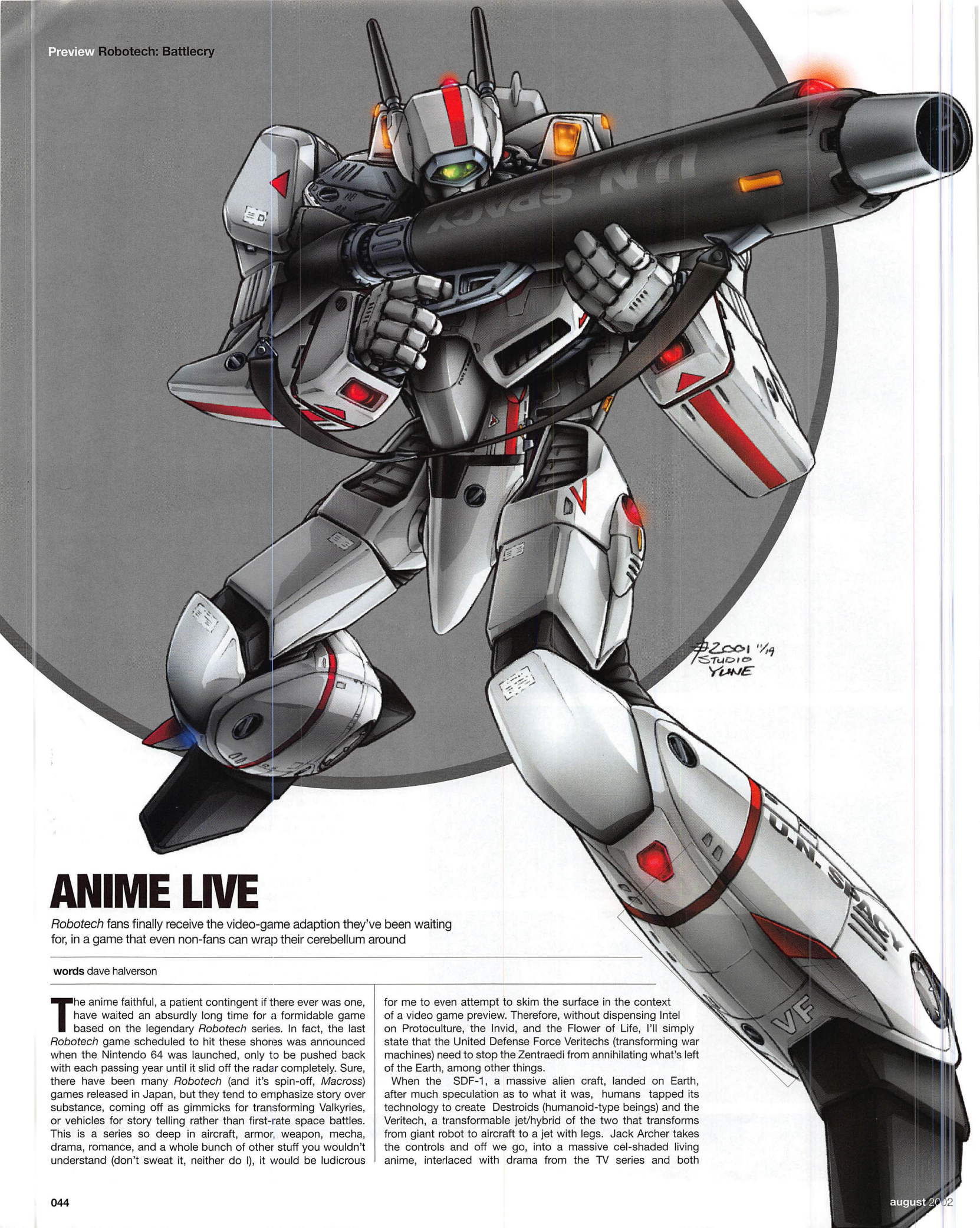
With Dynasty Tactics, Koei aims to deliver something that fans have been asking for, a tactical strategy game. This is contrast to their past strategy efforts, like the micro managed *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* or the macro-managed *Kessen*. *Dynasty Tactics* takes you right into the heart of battle, moving individual units around like pieces on a chess board (not completely dissimilar from a Quest *Tactics* game, if that reference helps). In other words, the combat is the focus of the game, with all the strategy devoted to the intricacies of the way you fight. And being a modern Koei game, the battles are quite a sight to behold. Using their famous Crowd Control Engine, dozens of real-time warriors can be seen clashing in an explosive display of processing power.

Dynasty Tactics fills yet another gap in Koei's impressive kanon of strategy titles.

PS2 **Dynasty Tactics** **preview**

developer: **koei**
publisher: **koei**
available: **september**

I've been waiting for this style of game from Koei for a good long while, and thus far, I have not been disappointed.



ANIME LIVE

Robotech fans finally receive the video-game adaption they've been waiting for, in a game that even non-fans can wrap their cerebellum around

words dave halverson

The anime faithful, a patient contingent if there ever was one, have waited an absurdly long time for a formidable game based on the legendary *Robotech* series. In fact, the last *Robotech* game scheduled to hit these shores was announced when the Nintendo 64 was launched, only to be pushed back with each passing year until it slid off the radar completely. Sure, there have been many *Robotech* (and it's spin-off, *Macross*) games released in Japan, but they tend to emphasize story over substance, coming off as gimmicks for transforming Valkyries, or vehicles for story telling rather than first-rate space battles. This is a series so deep in aircraft, armor, weapon, mecha, drama, romance, and a whole bunch of other stuff you wouldn't understand (don't sweat it, neither do I), it would be ludicrous for me to even attempt to skim the surface in the context of a video game preview. Therefore, without dispensing Intel on Protoculture, the Invid, and the Flower of Life, I'll simply state that the United Defense Force Veritechs (transforming war machines) need to stop the Zentraedi from annihilating what's left of the Earth, among other things.

When the SDF-1, a massive alien craft, landed on Earth, after much speculation as to what it was, humans tapped its technology to create Destroids (humanoid-type beings) and the Veritech, a transformable jet/hybrid of the two that transforms from giant robot to aircraft to a jet with legs. Jack Archer takes the controls and off we go, into a massive cel-shaded living anime, interlaced with drama from the TV series and both



accurate and fun portrayals of the events surrounding this compelling universe.

The game's developer, Vicious Cycle, knew what they were up against to create something that would both appease hardcore fans and deliver a game that would be fun and accessible to all carbon-based life forms. Orchestrating the air battles, for instance, the controls are not overly complex, as is often the case dealing with transformable ships with sophisticated weapons systems, and the gameplay is smooth and tight. There's not a whole lot of hardcore chasing going on a la Colony Wars and the like, but, rather, a tight concentrated battle you feel both a part of and in control of. The trademark vapor trails fill the skies, as you dispense wave after wave of invading Zintradei. Matters quickly escalate, you join the skirmish below, driving alien forces out of Macross City. Here, as you devour enemy mechs to the tune of 60-fps, the action is again smooth and fairly straightforward, with transforming, dodging, strafing and firing, all laid out comprehensively on the control pad. The massive city arenas play host to destructible buildings that contain actual framework, and a simplistic tracking system that keeps you pointed in the right direction without having to know calculus.

Regarding the cel-shaded visuals, the team is doing their best to pull out all the stops using subtle textures, reflection mapping, and some of the coolest smoke effects you'll ever see, to breathe life into *Robotech*, and I must say, they seem to be pulling it off. After getting an eyeful of the game's innards, it's hard to imagine it any other way.

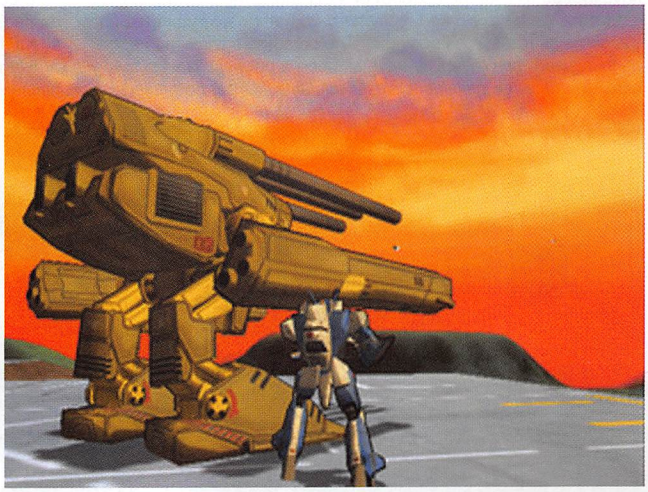
What remains to be seen is how the game will play once all of the elements are in place, with the story linking together events, and the balance between air and ground assaults in place. If our first look was any indication, expect no less than the pinnacle of anime-inspired gaming.



"FUN AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL CARBON-BASED LIFE FORMS"



Vicious Cycle is making the most of cel shading effects, adding subtle textures and incredible transparencies



XB GC PS2

Robotech: Battlecry

preview

developer: **vicious**
publisher: **tdk mediactive**
available: **oct**

Fans of *Robotech* have been waiting so long for a great game adaption, it's almost hard to accept that one has finally arrived.

FAST AND FURIOUS



Codemasters is set to prove that the third time is the charm with their latest Colin McRae racer

words tom ham

Excellence. How do you define it? Reputation? Wealth? Success? What about dedication, brilliance or accomplishment? If you've said any of these, you're absolutely right and without question, Codemasters and their venerable *Colin McRae* games epitomize this. What started off as "just another racing game" has turned into something of a phenomenon. Successfully blending incredible car physics and accurate rally racing models with great gameplay, the *McRae* games are favorites among hardcore racing fans around the world.

At E3 this year, Codemasters unveiled their famed rally series, *Colin McRae Rally 3*. And while it's early in the development cycle, we were able to see the vision that the developers had in mind. "With the first *Colin Mac Rally* title, our aim was to develop a ground-breaking new game," explains Guy Wilday, Producer of *Colin McRae 3*. "With *Colin 2*, we looked to consolidate this position utilizing a bigger-better-more philosophy. With *Colin 3*, we have looked to take the concept of a rallying game back to its purest form. We have worked really hard on getting everything about the game as realistic as possible. The cars, the environments, the handling and the playability have all been a priority. We are trying hard to create the next benchmark rally title." After some serious hands-on time with *McRae 3*, it's looking like Codemasters has another hit rally game on their hands.

One of the reasons that they have had such success with their rally racing games is their close working relationship with Ford Racing. I had the opportunity to travel to Greece to check out the Acropolis Rally (which Colin won) and see what really goes into rally racing first hand. "Our close relationship with Colin, Nicky (Colin's co-driver), and the Ford team and the power of the new hardware platforms has allowed us to offer something far closer to the experience of being involved in an actual rally than ever before," Wilday continues. "We recorded the actual Ford Rally car again for this game and with evolving technology, the car sounds have never sounded so realistic. Additional technical information has helped us model the physics even more realistically."

So what is *McRae 3* going to offer the player? For starters, all the cars (16 total) are going to have destructible bodies with fully operable component parts. Basically, every part of the car will show damage. And it gets better: The damage inflicted on your car will affect the overall performance of it (i.e. handling, acceleration, braking, etc.). "The cars deform more realistically then before," explains Wilday. "Doors will rip off, bonnets will fly off ('bonnet' refers

POWER SLIDE TO YOUR HEART'S CONTENT, BABY—THIS IS RALLY RACING AT ITS FINEST.





to the hood of the car). If your car is reacting a certain way while you're racing, you can visually check out the damage on your car to figure out why it's moving the way it is."

Another aspect of the game to look forward to in *McRae 3* are the visuals. To put it simply, the game is beautiful. "With the new hardware technology," explains Wilday, "we have been able to improve just about every element of the game. For example, the poly count in the cars has increased from around 600 to 14,000! This has allowed us to model a lot more of the car and add huge amounts of detail into every area." In addition to the outside of the car, Codemasters has overhauled the insides as well. For the game, both Colin and his co-driver Nicky Grist are fully animated. This means when you are driving, they will react to everything happening on the road. They will sway while you're making a tight turn, pitch forward when you brake and Nicky will even hold on to the roll cage to brace himself for a collision. Codemasters also has animations for Colin operating the car's controls (i.e. turning the wheel and changing gears). The whole effect is rather convincing.

But the heart and soul of *McRae 3* is the career mode, wherein players assume the role of Colin through a three-year campaign. "This is extremely immersive," says Wilday. "You are basically a part of the Ford Rally team and face the same challenges and decisions as a World Rally driver. There are new countries in this version of the game. We've added Spain, Japan and the U.S. There will be eight countries total."

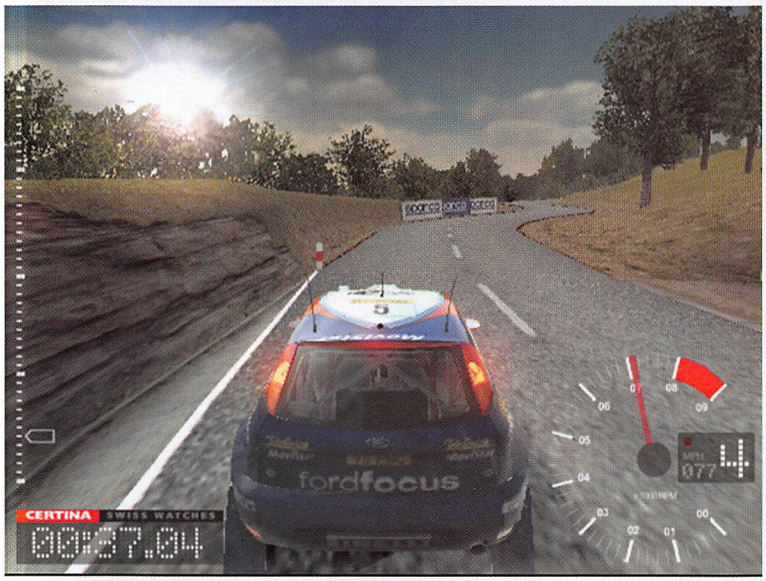
And believe it or not, Colin himself is a gamer and is deeply involved in the development of his racing games. "Colin does extensive play testing and gives us incredible feedback on the way the cars handle and feel," explains Wilday. "It's because of him that we have been so successful in recreating the rally experience." In addition to Colin, his co-driver Nicky has had a great deal of input. He has personally pace-noted each stage in the game, so players will be getting their pace notes directly from Colin's co-driver. These notes are completely authentic and are written in the same way as when they actually take part in a rally.

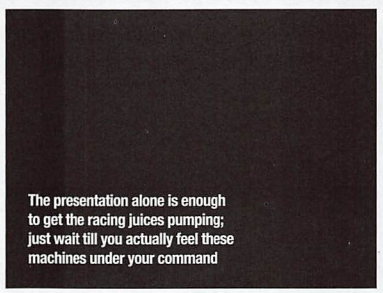
It's quite obvious Codemasters is ready to take their famed rally series to the next level. Their dedication to the sport is unsurpassed and it shows in *Colin McRae 3*. "We've really been focused on making the best game we possibly can," says Wilday. "The previous *Colin* games have given us a lot to live up to, and a lot of the guys working on the game have been there since the beginning and are determined to do whatever it takes to stay ahead of the field." **play**











The presentation alone is enough to get the racing juices pumping; just wait till you actually feel these machines under your command



XB PC PS2

Colin McRae Rally 3

preview

developer: **codemasters**
publisher: **codemasters**
available: **september**

Although rally racing isn't as popular in the States as NASCAR or Formula 1, Codemasters is looking like they could bring it to the masses with *Colin McRae 3*.

SPYRO TIMES 4

His home has been the PlayStation for so long—just what can we expect from Spyro on PlayStation 2?

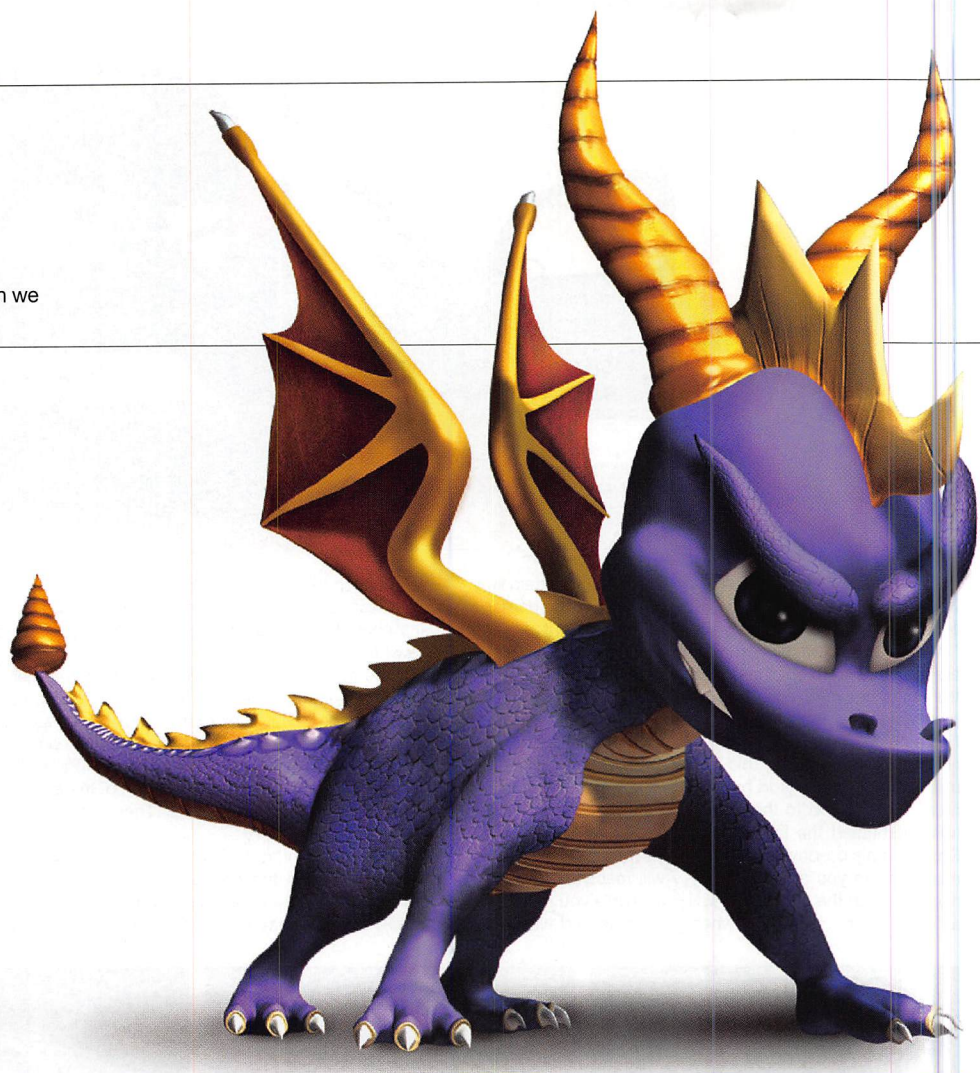
words brady fiechter

It can't be easy dealing with the pressures to keep a hugely successful franchise on solid ground after you've taken over the original designer's vision. It happened with *Crash Bandicoot* jumping into the arms of Traveller's Tales and away from Naughty Dog, and now Spyro is being transferred from Insomniac's magical touch to the now very busy Equinox/Check-Six Games. *Spryo: Enter the Dragonfly* is the purple dragon's first PlayStation 2 adventure, and the magnifying glass is inquisitively being placed heavily on the game's look.

Which is obsessively Spyro. I've seen little of the game, but the first few levels showcase the same color-intoxicating, wildly lit world we've come to expect from a *Spryo* game; the developers appear to be in tune to the proper Spyro frequency.

Task-based gameplay and an assortment of vehicles are taking on a lot of focus in this latest Spyro adventure: drive a tank, shoot from a sniping point, thaw the friends, activate the mechanics, grab the little creatures—all the enjoyable means to the typical you're-my-savior-so-here's-the-reward ending. It's Spyro stuff. "But not a retread"-- certainly what the designers want to emphasize: Some new stuff include a good amount of puzzle solving and collecting, utilizing new breath attacks like bubble and lightning.

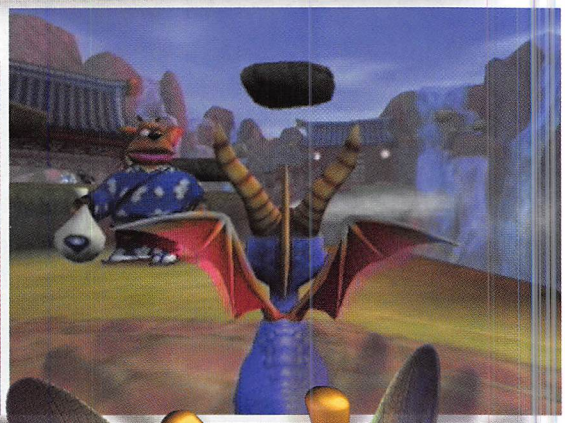
It's indeed all quite Spyro-like, but does it retain that same glowing spirit and playfulness? Not a question a two-level E3 demo is going to answer. That's the work of those screen-shots.

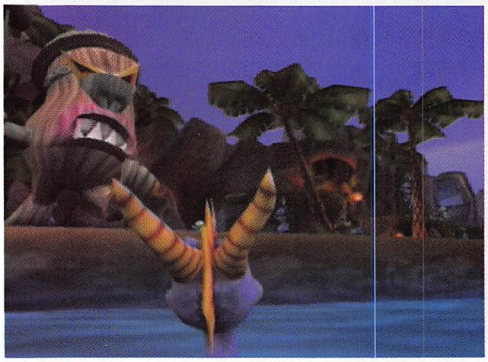


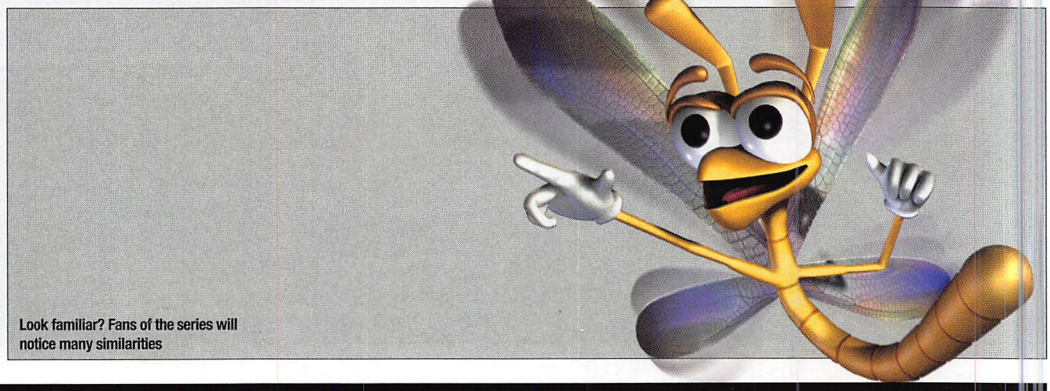
"IT'S INDEED ALL QUITE SPYRO-LIKE..."











Look familiar? Fans of the series will notice many similarities

PS2 **Spyro: Enter the Dragonfly** — **preview**

developer: **equinox/check-six games**
publisher: **universal**
available: **november**

Why let a good thing go? A new Spyro adventure gets no complaints from me.

The ultimate off-road driving adventure is heading to the Nintendo GameCube™ this summer! With five massive levels, a huge new arsenal of countermeasures and split-screen multiplayer action for up to four players, working for an elite band of smugglers has never been more exciting or dangerous. Make the drop, hit the nitro boost and get across the border before all hell breaks loose!



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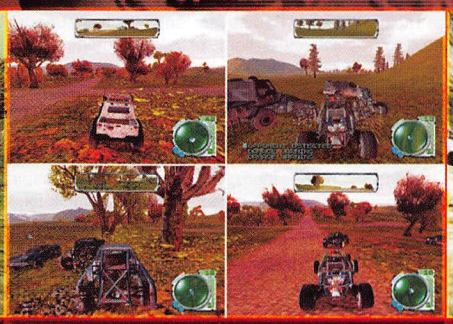
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T TEEN

Violence

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FEEL THE NEED

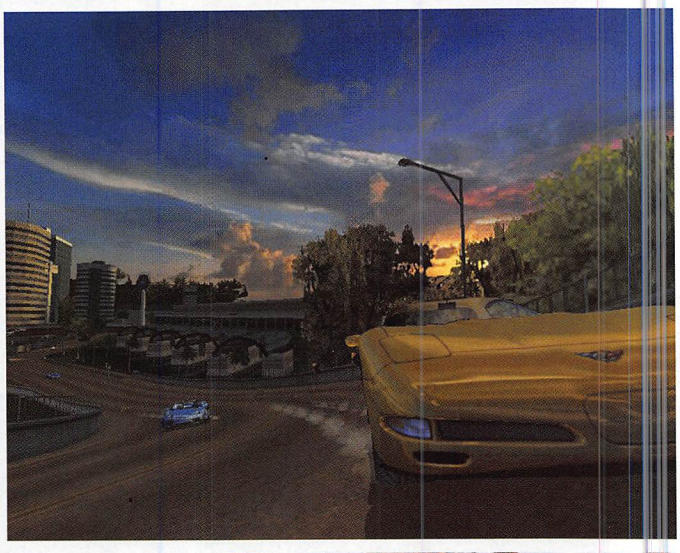
Any racing game that allows us to run from the cops is doing at least something right

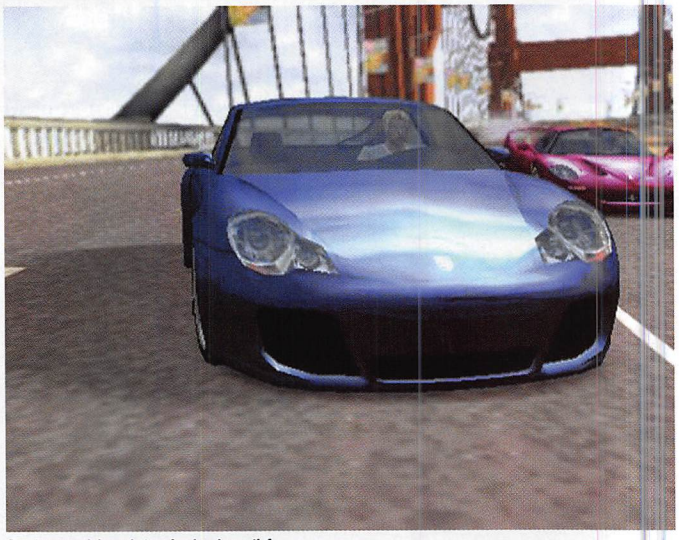
words brady fiechter











Great car models and stunning locales satisfy the surface requirements

Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2 is one of those forcefully flashy games that still manages to sustain a fun energy that grows with each sequel. On the PlayStation 2 for the first time, this very arcade-infused chase-racing game benefits hugely from simply looking good, making it feel like a new game in some ways. But there really isn't anything spectacular about *Need For Speed 2*, and it plays best as an entertaining distraction; you won't be jumping into any substantially challenging qualities like you will with, say, *GT3* or even *Ridge Racer*. Instead, expect a different spin on the genre, with high-speed pursuits of criminals driving really cool super cars; or even better, become the criminal and get the car to the drop-off for big rewards.

Moving away a bit from the traditional racing structure, the game is set up to feel more like a collection of challenges, chases, rewards and wild rides. I found myself spending most my time in the general racing scene, earning cars and tracks, but the game plays at full throttle in the pursuit modes, where the general objective is crazy maneuvers and wanton speeds, and the vehicle's light physics are immediately more appealing.

If one blemish is most distracting in *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2*, it has to be the overall lack of inspired, extensive design. From the music to the graphics to the general look and feel of the game, there is no hint of a game aspiring to be more than a very competent quick fix. Watching my car framed in slow-motion as it takes a jump, or spinning a frozen camera around the action any time I want, is an entertaining addition to the racing scene, but its use is curiously limited. A few little tweaks will make all the difference.

PS2 **PC**

Need for Speed: Hot Pursuit 2

developer: ea
publisher: ea
available: july

preview

If you want a different flavor of racing action, *Need For Speed: Hot Pursuit 2* delivers.

PlayStation®2

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB — Animated Violence

counterbalance

Angel STUDIOS



HOT-WIRED HIT

The Getaway blurs the line between filmmaking and gaming—and it's probably the most realistic game you'll play this year. Find out

words jon m gibson

The idea: model roughly 20 square miles of London on a tiny, little five-inch PlayStation game disc. Exactly. Without exception. Then, after mapping nearly all of England's most renowned city, allow absolutely any curious gamer—with a curious mind in tow—to drive around, exciting their curious, button-pressing fingers. But in order to get from point A to point B, that curious gamer must steal cars. Lots of 'em. And then, after stealing lots of cars and driving through miles of downtown London, that very curious gamer—probably even more curious than ever—must seep into the underbelly of that very city. And kill people. Lots of 'em.

But *The Getaway* doesn't stop there. It's a completely honest interpretation—and having viewed dozens of so-called "realistic" games, it's very rare that a developer goes to such lengths to actually represent reality to a key. To further emphasize the situation: Once I was actually able to take hold of the controller, I opened my eyes wide. Being in London for a few days prior, absorbing the landmarks and the atmosphere, it was a surprising sight to recognize the architecture, at the very least. But I wanted to call the developer's bluff—I wanted to be the lone editor that unearthed the lie. But *The Getaway* isn't a lie. Because after covering nearly 10 miles of territory, I finally found what I was looking for—I finally found *my* hotel. It *was* there, in perfect proportion to the surrounding buildings: five stories, complete with its trademark glass pane frame—it *was* obviously St. Martin's Lane. And the small performance theater was across the street. And the McDonald's was only a few hundred yards down the sidewalk. And the One Hour Photo only a few feet away from it. And the Long Island Ice Tea Shop in the distance.

"It's always been the team's ambition to make the largest, most accurate computer game rendition of a real-life city ever

seen. We wanted to try and capture some of the real feel of London rather than just the standard tourist attractions," Sam Coates, Lead Artist, offers up. "In keeping with the plot of the game, we wanted to show the player the city *without* the glamour—the back streets and alleyways of Soho, the council flats and run down areas south of the river; the city where the characters in the story grew up. Obviously, we've included all the guided tour locations too, from Piccadilly Circus and Buckingham Palace, to the Houses of Parliament and the Millennium Wheel."

"We always wanted the game to appeal to the widest possible audience and not just a hardcore game audience," Brendan McNamara, Game Director, illustrates. "We don't want to alienate that audience, but we have always loved the idea that anyone who liked an action movie would be interested in *The Getaway*. It's been very difficult to achieve a marriage between good gameplay and a good story. Usually one or the other suffers. Luckily, on *The Getaway*, we haven't been forced to make many compromises."

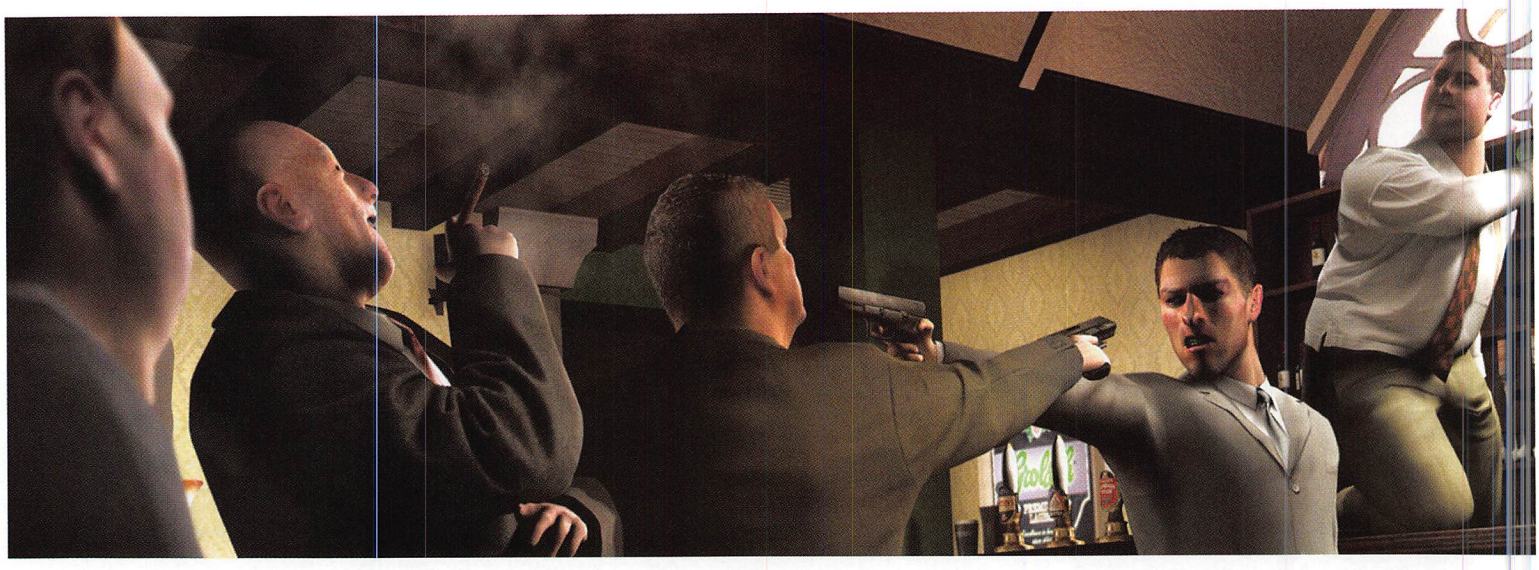
From there, the adventure only stems further. When the game actually begins, it relates to *Grand Theft Auto 3* on a basic level—but it quickly advances into a monster all its own. Initially, you must steal one of more than 65 various vehicles—many officially licensed, from '70s roadsters to modern-day BMWs—in order to weave through the confusing streets of London as ex-bank-robber Mark Hammond. Your sole goal is to get back your kidnapped daughter from the clutches of seedy crime boss Charlie Jolson, a 30-year vet of the East End's regular set of felonies (gambling, money laundering, hits—the works). Jolson just had his loose-cannon lackeys cap your wife and nab your little girl; and now you're running the gamut, bound by his every command. The cell phone rings; you listen.

That's where the third-person action truly comes into play. You must infiltrate warehouses, knock off local mad dogs, and explode storefronts with trick C4 in a stealthy, mod-fighting mode. The moderate control scheme allows you to hike up against walls, peer around corners and then take aim with a convenient auto-targeting system—but don't take the ease for granted. The dope-headed street urchins tend to park themselves in groups—like the hyenas they are—so there's loads of intensity and equal amounts of bloodshed throughout each mission. As you peek around a giant, wooden crate, you might notice a low-rent mobster guarding a staircase. But before you swing around and fire a round into his chest, you must admire your surroundings. Because the moment you reveal yourself, another low-rent lackey will be waiting to shoot you in the back.

After completing those 12 levels as Mark Hammond, battling your way through over a dozen gritty interiors and miles of rainy, exterior London, the story shifts into another gear. Vigilante cop Frank Carter is then introduced as a second playable character. But it's not Hammond that he's chasing—it's Jolsen, the kingpin that once had the police officer on the take; but that monetary bond has since been broken. Like Hammond, Carter just wants to wipe

Every building and every street in the game are modeled meticulously after real world London locations—the level of detail is simply astounding.





his name clean—to live a life that doesn't revolve around blood, bullets and bad guys.

To enhance the story—to bring it into the next-gen millennia—Team Soho decided to employ motion-capture cut scenes. But the result isn't exactly what you'd expect from a full-throttle action game like *The Getaway*. Sure, the 90-page script is nailed tight with sharp, intense dialogue—the type you'd expect to flow off of Scorsese's tongue. It's 100-fold what any character in *GTA3* said, by both length and language ("f—k," "shit," "pussy," "dick"—you get the idea). Yet, the technology is the key to what makes *Getaway* more an interactive movie than a typical gangster game. The developer has coined the phrase "Talking Heads" to illustrate the process, wherein an actor's face is scanned digitally using a still camera, allowing for easily manipulation and intricate voiceovers. Then the actors recite their lines while acting out the mo-cap scene. But instead of traditional optical sensors—you know, those big, annoying white balls—a magnetic process was used. The new technique offered the game makers two important advantages: 1) No more of those foam balls falling off, rolling around the stage; and 2) both the action and dialogue can be recorded simultaneously by using headsets, saving valuable time as well as adding to the realism of each scene.

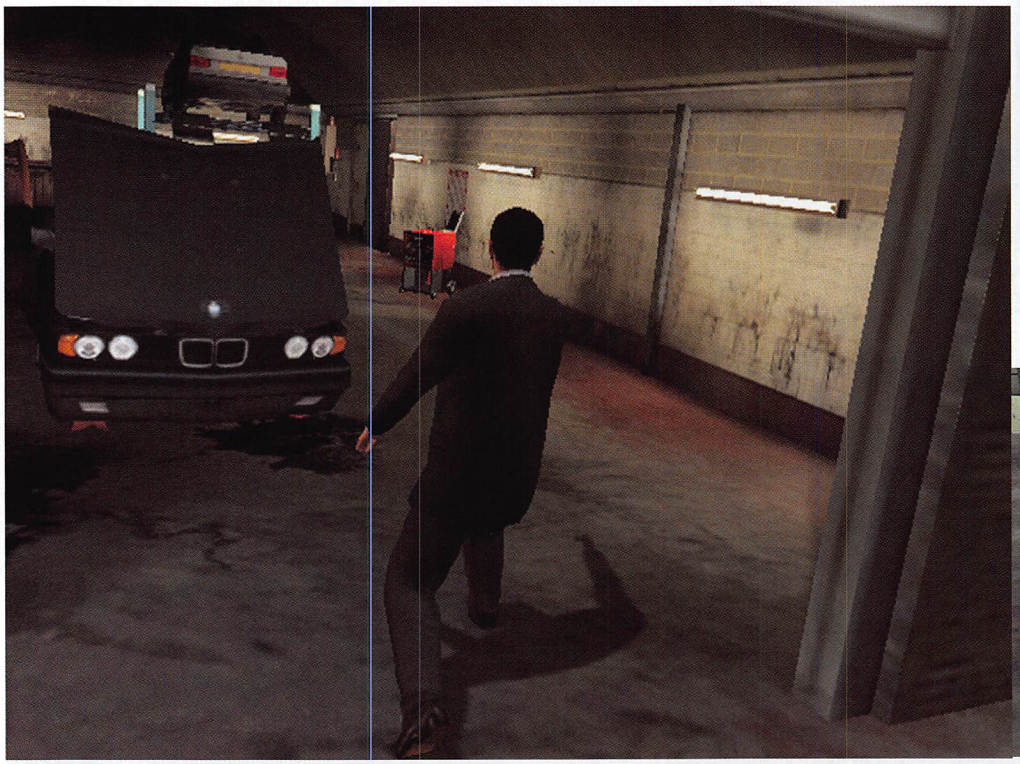
"...WE WANTED TO SHOW THE PLAYER [LONDON] *WITHOUT* THE GLAMOUR—THE BACK STREETS AND ALLEYWAYS..."

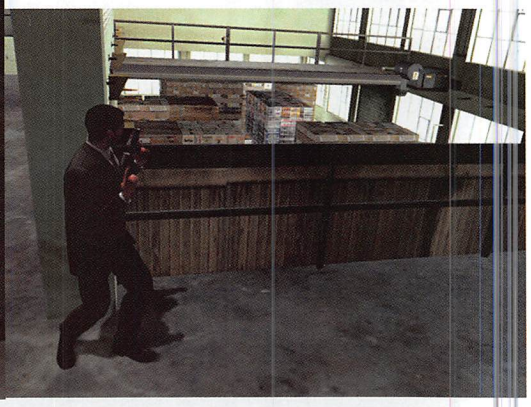
"We have spent a lot of time and money investigating and creating technologies that will bring to life our digital characters. We want to emotionally involve the player," Simon Wood, Production Designer, explains excitedly. "We use real actors, a proper script and get a true performance because of the technology we use to capture those performances. I would like the player to feel the anguish that Mark Hammond suffers through the death of his wife and the kidnapping of his son. I want to get across how nasty Charlie Jolson is—I would like the player to hate him. We also wanted to tell a story that has many levels; it's not so black-and-white or clear cut in the *real* world and we have tried to portray this in our game. The characters have complex emotions and reasons for their actions. So using the in-game engine enables us to keep the tension levels high and hopefully keeps the player right in the game."

McNamara adds: "We could obviously render higher resolution, more polys, bigger textures and better lighting, but you would see the difference and you could never get a seamless transition from cut scene to game. It's been a design requirement that the story enhances the game and doesn't hinder it."

After listening to McNamara and his crew talk for a few hours, touring me around their production facility overseas in downtown Soho, it's unclear what industry they actually work in: "Is this Hollywood or London," I constantly asked myself. But with gritty, mafioso action, an intense, humor-blotted script that rivals *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels* and *Snatch*, and ground-breaking tech, *The Getaway* appears to have captured the best of both worlds.

You'll get lost in it... literally. **play**





The combat system demands that the player exercise stealth, but this isn't Metal Gear by any means—there's more action here than all 20 Bond flicks combined.

PS2

THE GETAWAY

developer: **team soho/scee**
publisher: **scea**
avaialble: **august**

preview

The Getaway expands the *GTA* formula to new heights, offering up plenty of tense action, witty dialogue and an undeniable British flair. It promises to be the definitive gangster game.

MIDWAY

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TEEN T CONTENT RATED BY ESRB

Blood and Gore
Violence

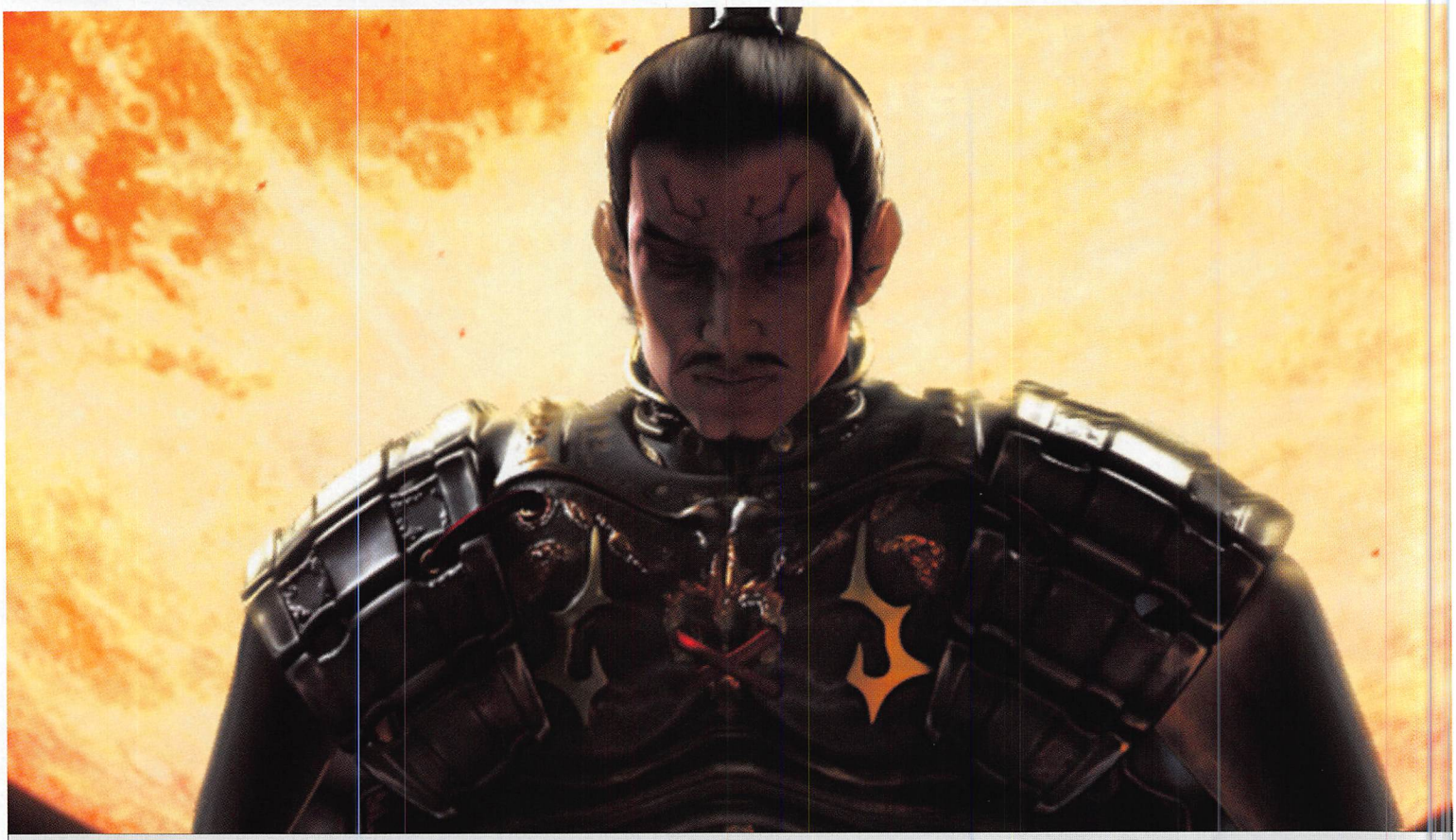
PlayStation®2

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ADVANCING THE ART



Capcom delivers yet another graphically stunning game with this Onimusha sequel

words brady fiechter





Gorgeously drawn and richly stylized, constructed with a mystical flair, *Onimusha II* is a fantastic sequel to one of the best games of last year. Directly traveling the rock-solid path laid down by Onimusha, the game contains everything that made the original crackle, strengthened with an improved attention to all the important details.

This is an action game in the purest sense; nearly every step involves Jubei, the samurai savior sent to end the plague of demonic forces, slicing through monsters, demons and evil warriors. His weapons are limited in quantity yet arcanely powerful, charged with magical energy that is syphoned from the souls of the fallen. These spirts also heal Jubei and imbue his armor and weapons with increased force and strength.

Initially, *Onimusha II* feels slightly limited in its scope, confined to extremely simplistic combat and puzzle elements, but the gameplay is so ideally focused and develops with such a ceaseless energy that the enemy slaughter just gets consistently more exciting. It's devilishly satisfying slashing and cutting with a bloodthirsty abandon, thrusting your sword into a fallen foe, finding the fleshy sweet spot that brings death with a single blow; the action is commanding in its simplicity.

The beings you face are often monstrous in size, swinging massive clubs and blades. Locking up with these aggressive foes, sensing their mighty weight and power, is always intense. And they look so good with their skilled animations and thick, marvelously constructed designs, recalling a gothic-influenced, more organic tone

"...A TRADITIONAL ACTION GAME OF A HIGH ORDER"









The level of detail in the settings is a substantial improvement over Onimusha. You'll find a number of occasions where you want to stop and drink it all in



(somebody's been studying *Devil May Cry*). I loved the little touches that fully complete the experience — the subtle movements, creepy design strokes, the way a group of enemies converges out of the shadows.

There is an elegance mixed with chaos that gives the game a unique mood. Calming colors and quiet moments wrap around the darker, bleaker influences, creating a boldly inviting world to explore. Once you branch outside the amazing confines of the village, which exists as the epicenter of commerce and conversation, the most impressive moments begin to consistently build; I especially enjoyed the atmosphere of the forest, surrounded in beautiful waters and covered with a seemingly palpable weight of a dense fog.

Exploration is fairly defined, but the game does not feel constricted. There's a lot of moving back and forth, opening doors and powering up. A good amount of dialogue builds the prosaic story—a workable but ultimately thin tale of magic and demons and heros —providing cutscene breaks and a more interesting purpose to the quest. A compelling story is always welcome, but Onimusha II is not powered by exposition. Play it, and you discover a traditional action game of a high order.

PS2

ONIMUSHA II

play rating

developer: **capcom**
publisher: **capcom**
available: **august**

One of the more satisfying action titles to come along in far too long, *Onimusha II* continues the strengths of the original.

SIMPLY EPIC

The new benchmark in medieval action and adventure is wholly engrossing, visually stunning, and only on Xbox

words dave halverson

Throughout life, certain key moments (scenes from a movie, a piece of music or art, a catastrophic event, seeing Halle Berry naked) define who we are, deep down. It's either that or past lives—take your pick. If I had a past life, I'm pretty sure it was as some kind of mead-drinking, axe-wielding Norseman, since I have a propensity towards all things medieval. Come to think of it, I think most gamers do. Maybe we all fought in wars together back in the day. Someone call Shirley McClain. Sadly, where Conan the Barbarian and Excalibur once stood as benchmarks for their kind, we now have CG-riddled cheese, but what film has lost, gaming has more than made-up for. What *Rune* and *Draconus* began, *Enclave* will now finish, combining everything those games had—raw adventure, spellcasting, exotic locales, dirty little snorting villains, and a relentless onslaught of mythological beings—with everything they didn't. *Enclave* grants gamers smart enough to purchase it smooth frame rates, near photo-realistic textures, tactical level progression, real-time RPG elements, and a third-person camera (thank you), in a truly breathtaking fantasy setting—the world of *Enclave*. (All hail the Xbox, its power is grand.) You command Druid, Knight, Huntress, Halfling, and up to eight other warriors in campaigns both light and dark—

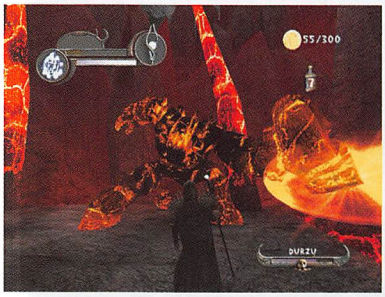


Enclave features some of the best texture work we've ever seen



that's right, fight for both. Maybe you really can change the stars.

Since the cataclysmic clash between the demon Vatar and the Wizard Zale that tore a rift into this world, Celenheim had begun to recover, but the rift could no longer hold back the outlanders, and the dark forms struggled back to life. You begin the game as a war-torn knight, thrust into the fray out of need rather than desire, fighting against the invading outlanders to emerge from the dungeon where Queen Aylindril's guards have deposited you for tax evasion. Taking notice of your bravery and skill, the Queen decides to have mercy on you and allow you to fight for her, moving against the invading forces to the source of the raid. Along the way, those you meet or save will be at your disposal, each brandishing unique weaponry or sorcery, in order to better deal with the array of situations each region begets. From exotic temples to the burning pits of the outland wastes, within a few hours you will find yourself wholly engulfed, intrigued, and positively crazy-glued to this adventure. The pacing is fashioned in such a way that it draws you into each and every inch of each level. Real-time

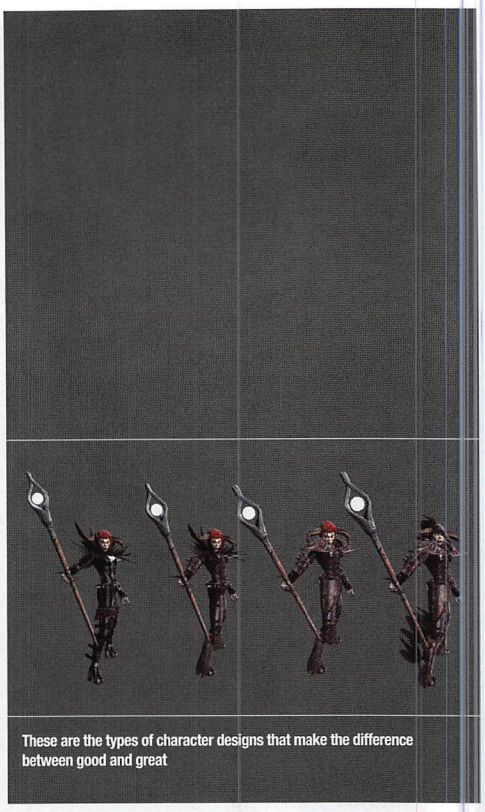


Prepare to face down awe-inspiring beasts and traverse enchanted realms the likes of which you have never seen in a video game



"YOU'LL FIND YOURSELF CRAZY-GLUED TO THIS ADVENTURE"





These are the types of character designs that make the difference between good and great







events, such as structures that crumble or change, cliffs that fall away, or enemy forces that change strategy to counter your attack, create a sense of angst that is further driven home by the aggressive nature of the game's beasts, who seem to truly enjoy dispensing terror. This is extraordinary gamemaking.

Playing in third-person, the frame rate takes a minor hit, but the trade-off—characters you truly relish, especially as you begin to outfit them—is well worth the miniscule, almost unnoticeable, stutter. You'll be switching into first-person often enough anyway—an effortless transition—to snipe with your Elvin Huntress, skilled with a bow, or beautiful Druid, who wields a magical staff. She is, by the way, God's gift to medieval females. The balance between close proximity sword/axe play and a projectile strategy—a major area of importance in an adventure of this nature—is orchestrated like a fine symphony. In each area the give and take between weapons dispersal versus the enemy AI and available weapons and riches has been tuned for optimum immersion. The only way to describe the graphics in *Enclave* is, "Oh-my-God!" Which you will find yourself saying over and over. If this game played like a steaming pile of mule droppings, I would still have to trudge through it just to behold the stunning visuals on display. Faces contort, armor shines, pits steam, and the skies scroll with individual layers dividing the clouds and space; it's magnificent.

If indeed we are defined or affected by the video games we experience, *Enclave* will join the bank of games in your personal RAM as one of those you will recall often in the company of friends, preferably over a slab of meat and mug of ale.

"WHAT RUNE AND DRACONUS BEGAN ENCLAVE WILL NOW FINISH"











Enclave

developer: **swift**
publisher: **universal**
available: **july**

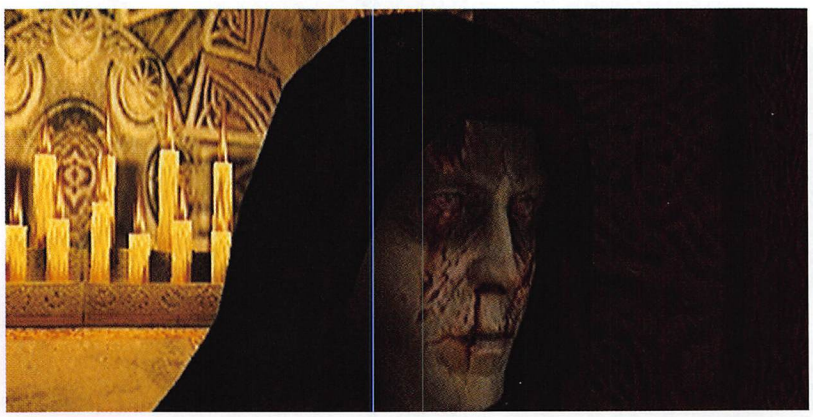
play rating

While the rest of the world pants about the nonsensical *Morrowind*, the pinnacle of action role-playing is right under their noses. Wake up and smell the mace

TORTURED SOULS

Silicon Knights has crafted one of the freshest, scariest, and most compelling games of the 128-bit era

words dave halverson



There's nothing quite like a first-party Nintendo game, be it from NCL, Rare, or Hudson. However, like Retro Studios, Samus' new home, Silicon Knights, creators of the original *Legacy of Kain*, is new to the stable, and this first-party Nintendo game is their first. Reports coming in over our gossip and here-say wire pegged the game a dud, which came as quite a shock, seeing how it's been in the oven so long (originally slated for release a couple of years back on the 64), and is from an accomplished team under the tenure of Nintendo. As I do with all games, I took what I heard, passed it on down the line and waited like everyone else. Looking back, I'm somewhat glad my expectations were set on simmer, because without the usual angst and anticipation I normally endure prior to a big Nintendo release (I'll be a mess the week before Starfox Adventures hits), this one just kind of came out of nowhere. Prior to this, I had never really been scared by anything in a game. I've come close a couple of times but never really been terrified. So far, *Eternal Darkness* has nailed me twice, once mildly, and once I almost whizzed. So, it's safe to say, turn out the lights.

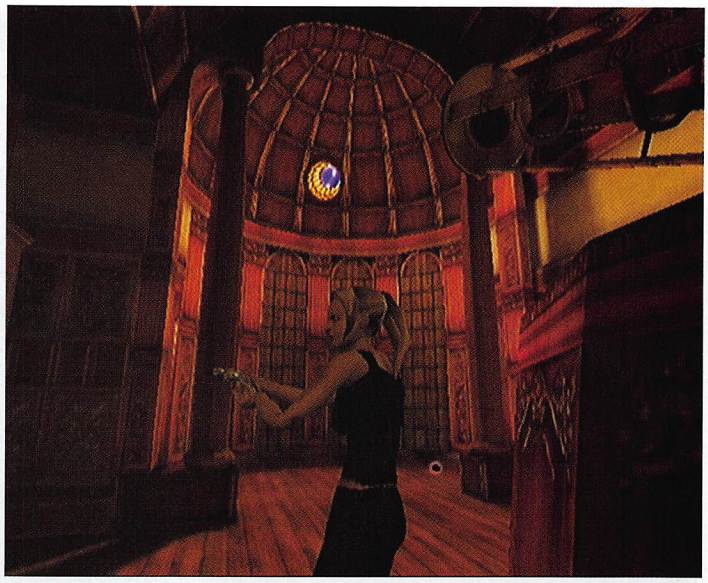
The game begins much like a *Parasite Eve* or *Resident Evil* as Alexandra Roivas, a "headstrong and independent woman," begins to investigate the grizzly murder of her grandfather, which has just taken place in his extremely large, spooky mansion. When I say grizzly, by the way, I mean no-zhead, big-pile-of-mush grizzly; this game wears its M rating proudly. Just as I began to sigh at the

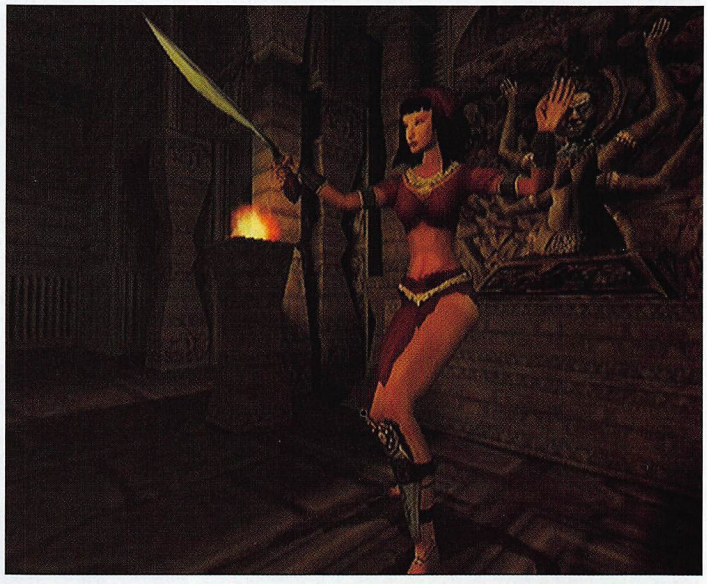
"PERSONALLY, I FIND IT UTTERLY FASCINATING"

thought of another Res Evil clone (big house, monsters, I know the drill) I was swept away to 26 B.C. where I began an adventure as Pious Augstus, a centurion and commander during the Roman Empire's campaigns in Persia. I became even more intrigued when ultimately—not of my doing—he died a horrible death. Hmmm, what was that all about? After further investigating the mansion, I was transported into the life of a beautiful Cambodian servant, Ellia, A.D. 1150, and soon after, made to witness my next character's slow, torturous death while delivering a message to Charlemagne himself—via my first taste of the game's Sanity Meter. The characters you play become so terrified that they begin to lose it; their only way of regaining sanity is by killing whatever has triggered their fright. There's something so odd (we're so used to keeping our character(s) alive) having them killed, that's just...different. The game is structured much like the first *Heavy Metal* animated feature, where a single entity tragically affects so many lives, spanning time. Not that *Eternal Darkness* bears any resemblance otherwise, but perhaps this is why certain people cannot embrace it. Personally, I find it utterly fascinating—on an intellectual, scary, and enjoyment level. This is a unique, beautiful, and engulfing game.

Shifting the focus over to the graphics on display, the game delivers just as big. The textures are among the best ever on the Cube; although the areas are locked down, they are real-time and utterly spectacular, and the player models, while not animated perfectly (damn close though) are meticulously detailed, with animated hair, facial expression, and clothes that appear worn, not painted-on (save for Alexandra's black tank).

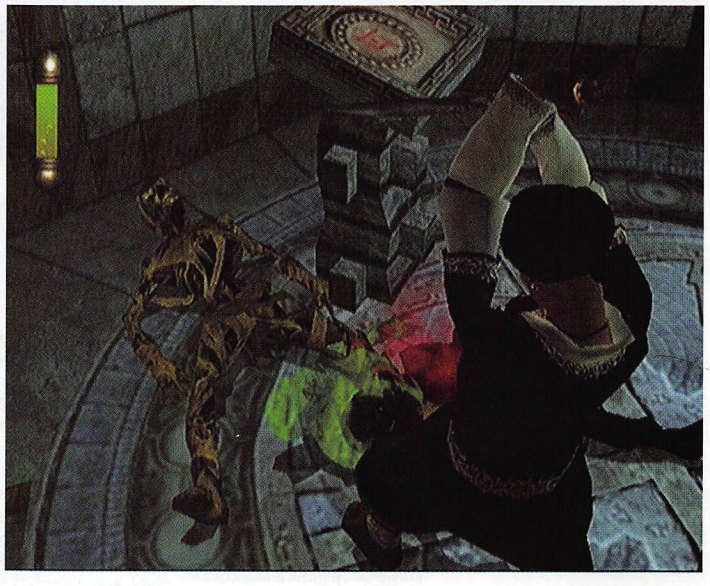
Beneath the surface, digging into the game's impressive depth and structure, you'll find a complex yet fascinating spell-casting system, and special nuances such as a character who can perform autopsies on what or who he kills; once again, M rated. All of this delightful action and horror comes wrapped in a bone-chilling soundtrack with enough chanting and "what the hell was that?" sound effects to send you running for the light switch, and a big "Only for Nintendo" on the box. Just like old times. The true power of the system has begun to unfold; from now until early '03, we are in for some of the most spectacular Nintendo games in the history of the company. *Eternal Darkness* has officially opened the gate. Let the games begin. **play**





Don't get too attached to any of them because they are all...going to die





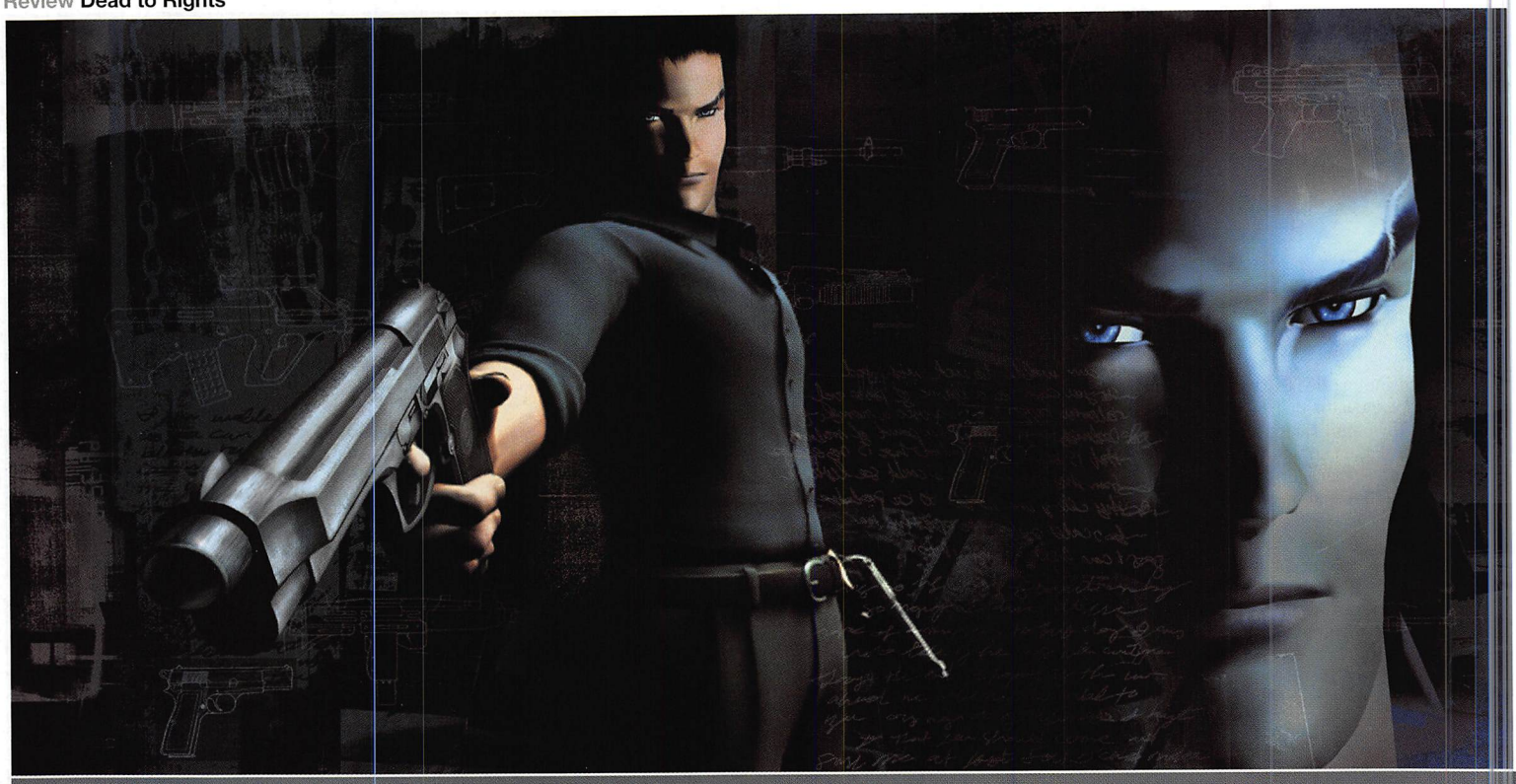
GC

Eternal Darkness: Sanity's Requiem

developer: **silicon knights**
publisher: **nintendo**
available: **now**

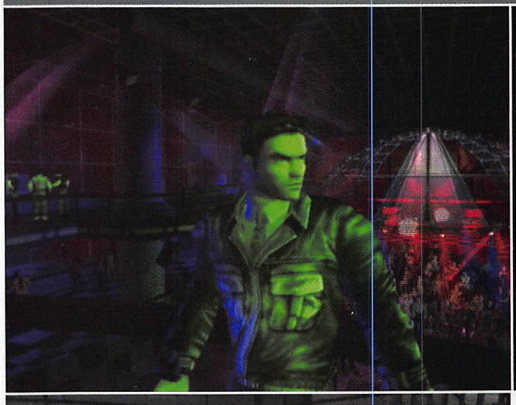
play rating

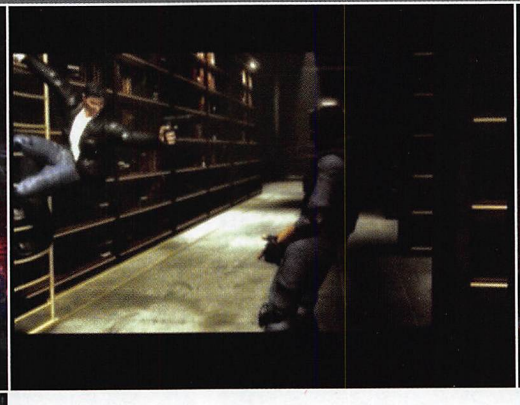
Games like this elevate the GameCube to the heights I expect from Nintendo. It's been a long time coming but, I'm happy it's here.

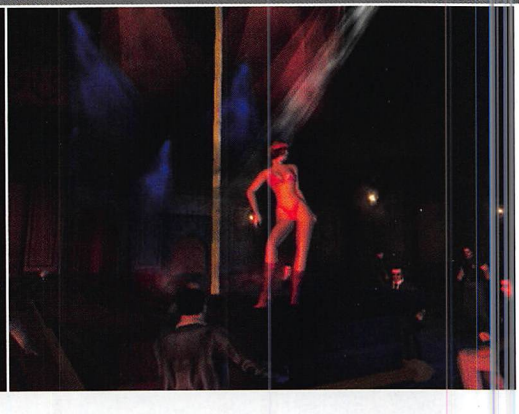


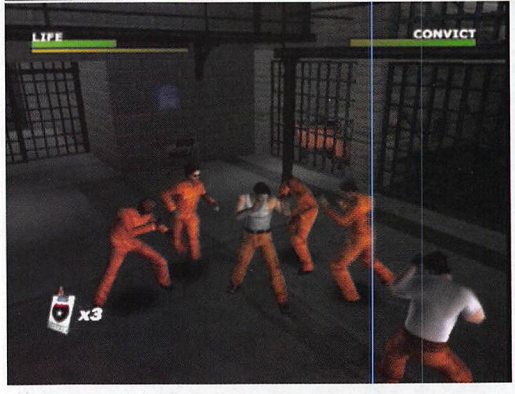
BIG CITY BRAWN

Lending more credence to the view that Xbox is the console for adults, this gritty adventure refuses to compromise its mature sensibilities









In the prison, you have to box, lift waits and kick much ass to earn cigarettes for barter

An outrageous display of frenetic excess, pulled off with enough grimy flair to plunge us into its pestilent world, *Dead to Rights* is a satisfying jolt of adult gaming. It makes no apologies for its brand of senseless, ceaseless, grossly dramatized action. Even the attract screen vibrates as if it were designed by a David Fincher impersonator on speed.

Cut to a grimly cool establishing shot of a dusky city, from sky to rooftop to shadowy underbelly. The gritty streets introduce the irascible Slate, an action-movie-engineered cop who luckily doesn't have to worry about the wrath of his chief, so every criminal within range gets dropped. A nice assortment of firearms always find a home with Slate, leading to scenes of death and destruction and overall chaos of outlandish proportions. But here's the real kick: the game offers you the ability to manipulate time, suspending your character in slow-motion as he dives and searches for targets. It's a blast floating and shooting, and the general targeting system is intuitive and smoothly efficient. There are those moments when the battles become so overwhelming in numbers that the thrill of an unpredictable shootout is replaced by more of a concern for perfunctory technique, and the challenge is too much about acclimating to enemy positioning than skilled gameplay. If the game was all shooting, it would stall without hope of recovery, but because the storytelling is well done within the structure of the world, the dialogue rings with a popcorn appeal that emboldens the impact of the battles. An involving sense of adventure keeps

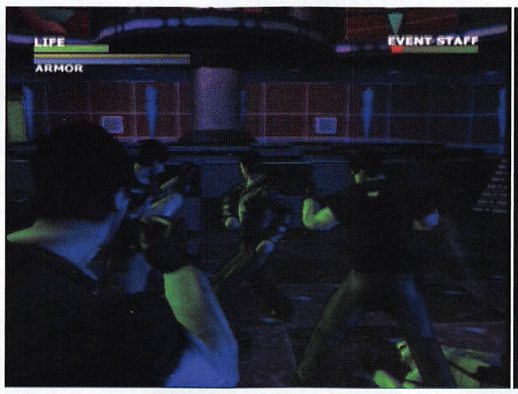
"...A VERY MATURE, VERY ADULT ADVENTURE..."

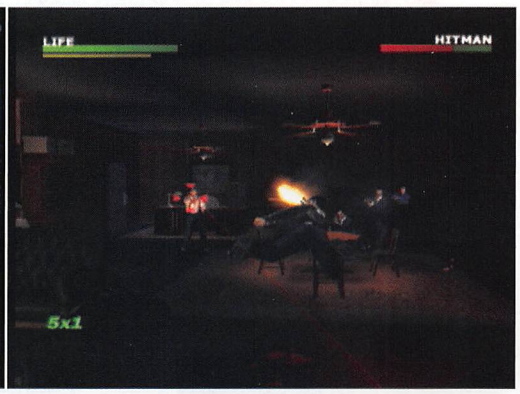
the game highly charged, and chapters devoted to brutal hand-to-hand confrontations show far more life than any classically inspired beat-em-up of the past few years. The game does not compromise in its seedy, mature sensibilities. One of the first major events puts you in a strip club, where you command a dancer to distract the bouncers with a titillating performance. Grind, grind, grind away go those hips while moans of freaky satisfaction get the crowd worked up; the shocking newness of this in a game is strangely intriguing. And when was the last time

You gotta see it all in motion to appreciate the intensity of the violence

your character offers colorful conversation in the bathroom of a prison? Like the game in its whole, these scenes look good, play well, show originality and chance, finely paced and executed.

Full of progressive, perversely flavorful ideas, *Dead to Rights* is a very mature, very adult adventure, and while it can feel slightly contrived, it's not brushed as a cartoon. Its only real problem is an inability to take the experience to the next level: Shadow, your dog who helps navigate obstacles and attack the enemy, is underrepresented; the hand-to-hand combat could have benefited so much from the ability to use all the capable blunt objects from the settings; its imagery is appealing but rarely richly imagined. Still, *Dead to Rights* is a very capable, nicely unique blend of strong gameplay ideas, and the challenge is a refreshing change. **play**





XB

Dead to Rights

play rating ●●●●●

developer: **namco**
publisher: **namco**
available: **august**

A solid action game with unique adventure qualities and tremendous violence is what I want to see more of. Never a dull moment in *Dead to Rights*.

DUKE STYLE

Duke gets sideways in his latest and perhaps greatest adventure yet

words dave halverson





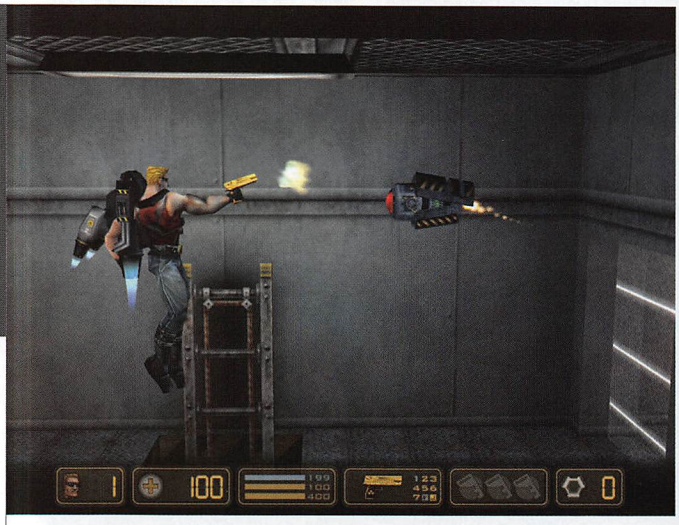


Does every megalomaniac have a helicopter? It would seem so











Of the game's many devices, the jet pack is utilized especially well...

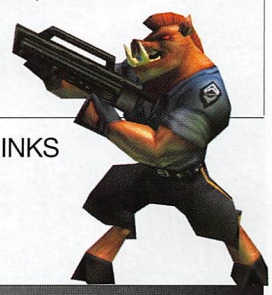
Love him or hate him, Duke Nukem's been around for a while now, becoming the poster child for ass-kickin, babe-lovin', pig-hating, alien-splattering fun for post-pubescent males the world over. His last foray on the 64, *Zero Hour*, was one of the console's most underrated games ("boo-hoo" the babies cried, 'cause it was too hardy-wardy) and *Land of the Babes* flew by under the radar, too late to the PlayStation party. Where both of those games would have made sense on PC (Duke's time-share), Manhattan project seems tailor-made for console, but alas, it's available on PC, for now, so I busted out my pad and took the new GForce 4 for a spin.

A 3D side-scroller dripping with eye candy, phenomenal sound, and extreme polish, *Manhattan Project* has Duke fighting, and platforming (!) his way across eight massive city zones, combing the innards and outers of skyscrapers, subways, Chinatown, nasty underworld zones, and other friendly places, makin' bacon and saving babes. But it's not all about squashing aliens this time out. Duke's out to pop a few caps into Mech Morphix, who's perfected his recipe for GLOPP (Gluon Liquid Omega Phased Plasma; tastes like chicken), deadly ooze that turns anything it comes in contact with into Rosie O'Donnell, er, I mean vile beasts. By finding weapons along the way that can harness the slime's power, Duke can melt down the mutants already affected, as he forges ahead towards Morphix' secret lab. Unfortunately the lovely ladies who tag along wherever Duke goes are caught in the middle, literally, squeezed into GLOPP bombs like little babe silos. Free them and enjoy the boing-oing.

For a company known for their 3D prowess (it's right in the title), 3D Realms (see) has crafted a shockingly dexterous side-scroller, sodden with secret areas, puzzles, grappling, climbing, sliding, double-jumping, conveyor belts, and everything else that makes 'em mmm-mmm good. And it's gorgeous too; no, it's f-----g beautiful. With everything cranked on (1024x768, 32-bit textures, and trilinear filtering), it's downright sinful.

It's too bad Realms didn't slide MP in as a bonus on console, while we wait for *Duke Nukem Forever*, his next foray in the third dimension. Then again, it's high time PC gaming got some *2-Deep* justice, and it most certainly has, at a bargain price no less. If you PC has the power, grab a Firestorm Wireless, and have yourself a little party. **play**

GIVE A PIG A GUN AND ALL OF A SUDDEN IT THINKS IT'S MORE THAN "THE OTHER WHITE MEAT"



PC

Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project

play rating ●●●●●

developer: **3d realms**
publisher: **arush**
available: **now**

Duke Nukem: Manhattan Project is just the type of game that PC gaming needs. Amidst a sea of First Person Shooters and RPGs a little platforming warms the soul... BABY!

Formula One 2002

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2

developer: ea / publisher: ea / available: now

I had seriously reached a point where I could care less if I never saw another F1 simulation; I mean, how much better can it get? Well, apparently a whole heck of a lot better. This team must have crawled directly into the brain trust of Formula One racing to have produced a game this seeping with perfection. Short of coming to your house, picking you up and delivering you to the real thing, we are all systems green. Instantly recognizable, the ability to realistically draft—complete with sound effects and a slightly blurred forward speed burst—is almost too cool to handle, but when the clouds roll in and it starts to gently rain—forget about it, you'll kiss your PS2 square on the tray. The courses too look almost frighteningly real and the two cockpit cams, which offer life-like vibration and feedback, along with hyper-detailed steering wheels, controls and mirrors, put you behind the wheel like never before. You'll be grinnin' like a schoolboy by the time you reach for the first tear-off. Surrounding all of this glorious action, you'll of course find all of the usual suspects: Challenge, Single Grand Prix, Full Championship and Team Dual modes and everything that goes with them; but at its core, the gameplay and uncanny sense of F1 racing is what *F1 2002* is really all about.

DAVE HALVERSON



Madden 2003

preview

system: playstation 2

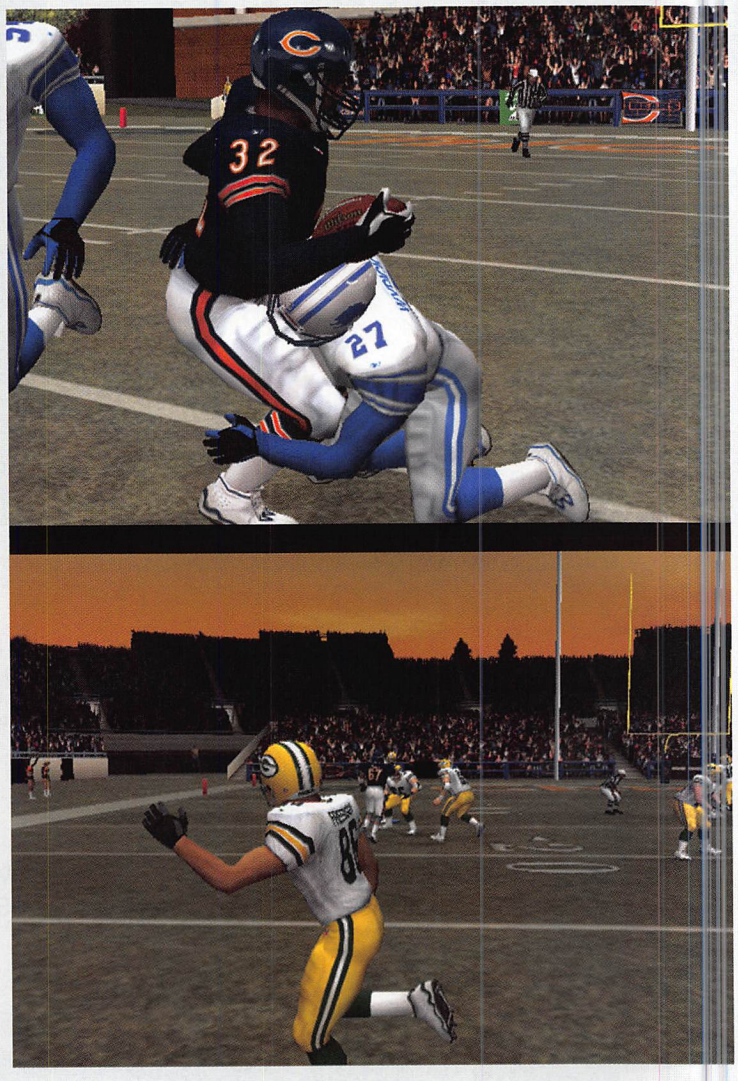
developer: ea / publisher: ea / available: august

Madden 2003 is so close to The Real Thing that you kind of stop noticing the benign stutters—animation transitions still need a lot of work—in an amazingly complex system. First thing I did before jumping into a season was watch the full-game demo between the Colts and Jets, and I was hugely entertained by the depth of realism I was seeing—the way a defensive back reaches with a desperate hand for a wide receiver's leg; the way the ball carrier dances through the line; the convincing response of a linebacker reacting to the quarterback. As a simple bystander, you can really study the intricacies of the movement on the field, gaining an appreciation for the craft EA has mastered.

And then you play the game, and all the convincing motion onscreen is yours to create. Like Madden himself said, the "optifrokulon" does the transmitting, and you just revel in its kickassness.

This series keeps receiving refinement and treatment every year. You know what you're going to get; it's now just that much better. All the little extras you demand are here, but inside all these artificial extensions, the heart of what a great football game should possess exists in incredible form. You play *Madden 2003*, and it just does feel like you're living the action. Sports games are better than they've ever been, and here is one of the best. (Next up...online play.)

BRADY FIECHTER



NCAA 2003

play rating ●●●●●

system: gamecube

developer: ea / publisher: ea / available: august



What's this, a blurry crowd and cheerleader models that aren't quite on par with the players...hey! I'm joking, of course. It's funny how that's pretty much all there really is left to groan about pertaining to *EA Sports NCAA Football*. Everything else is pretty much perfection. The play by play when applicable (while still a bit parrot-like) is seamless, the player models are so real you can smell the BO, and the replays so comprehensive you'll be picking the grass out of your teeth. Of course, all of the usual seminary trimmings apply, in terms of schools, stats, fields and the like, but adding to the file, *NCAA 2003* boasts Dynasty, Rivalry, and even a Mascot mode (this you've gotta see), rounding out what was already a comprehensive package. You can either drop into a quick game and almost instantly assimilate the controls or dive deeper into a season and really dig in to the nuances of the college game, sans the kegers and all-night hot tub parties. Me, I always begin with a barrage of Hail Mary's just to see if the developers are still on their toes. I still remember that first Madden and the good 'old cross pass. Those days, I'm afraid, are over; this puppy picks up on it when you itch your nards. Football is alive and well on the GameCube.

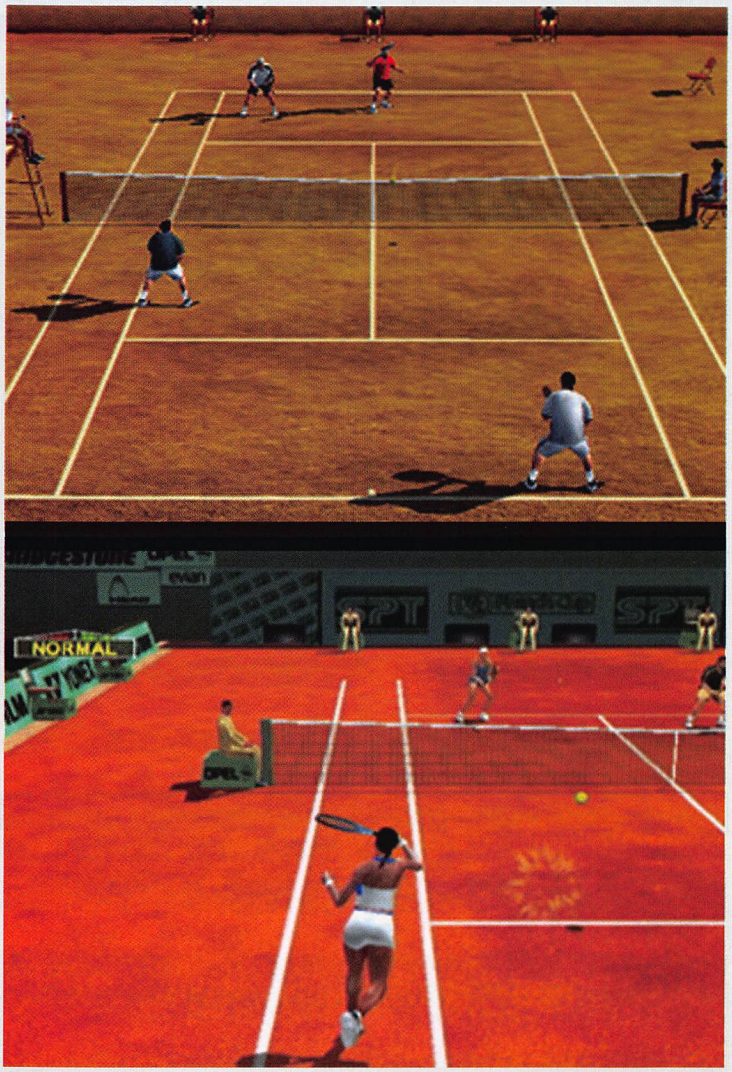
SHANE REED

Sega Sports Tennis 2K2

preview

system: playstation 2

developer: sega / publisher: sega / available: august



Besides being the only way Master Tim may ever see a Wimbledon final, *Sega Sports Tennis* is among the two must have tennis games of the season, the other being Namco's delightful Smash Court, the benefactor of the missing angels in Sega's game, Anna Kornikova and Martina Hingis, as well as top men André and Pete. Top seeds from both the mens and womens draw are represented, however, including Monica Seles, Lindsay Davenport, the William's sisters, Patrick Rafter, and more. The game, while almost identical to the Dreamcast version, has slightly improved models (although they are still quite scary up close during change overs and replays) and boasts the create a player mode which allows you to build and compete with your own disturbed creation. While the game wasn't quite reviewable, we hope it's due to the current INSANE AI, where even on Easy the opponents are ruthless, regardless of their ranking. We'll have a review as soon as Sega is done tinkering with this new version.

SHANE REED

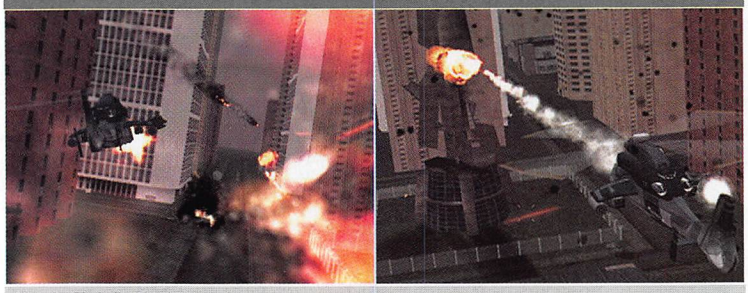
capsule reviews

Fire Blade

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: midway
publisher: midway
available: now

Quality helicopter games being in short supply, Midway's *Fire Blade* is both timely and well devised. The game hinges on the usual premise: target and destroy air and ground targets using a sophisticated arsenal of weapons. Nevertheless, where many have fallen short, *Fire Blade* delivers, with easy to grasp flight controls, compelling mission ops, and most importantly, the proper balance between available weapons and tactics for the not so friendly skies and road ahead. Looks mighty fine too. Of course, the premise couldn't be more timely, with terrorist cells flaming up around the globe, and 18 missions over four campaigns on which to vent your frustrations, flying two choppers—a Carrier and Vendetta attack copter. You can even go stealth and lay waste to unsuspecting ground troops, sending 'em on a one way ticket to meet Allah. DH



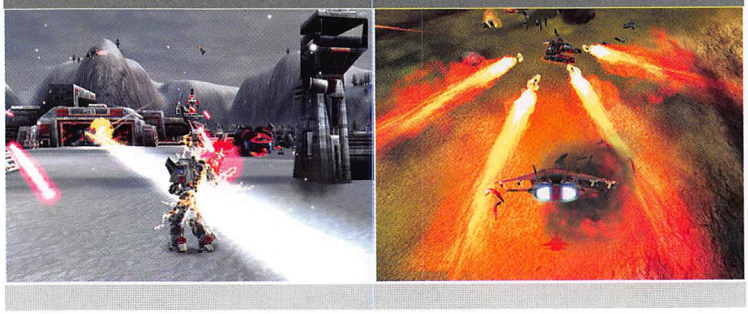
Thunder Blade flashback anyone?

Gun Metal

play rating ●●●●●

system: xbox
developer: rage
publisher: majesco
available: now

As is their credo, Rage gets 90% right and 10% really wrong. *GM*'s graphics are gorgeous; the control is tailor able; and the engine is quick and smooth. However the mission objectives leave no room to breathe and take in all the loveliness; the physics on the robot are too floaty given its awesome scale; and the difficulty becomes insane too quickly. In mission six, as a massive flying dirigible nears your base, the only way to stop it and fulfill your mission objective is to land on it and pelt the thing like there's no tomorrow, while it dispenses wave after wave of smaller ships you don't have time to attack. So it becomes a race of killing before you're killed, with your job to find the perfect line and weapon dispersal to make it out alive. Having to master stages of this magnitude, early in the game, leaves you weary to move on. I spent many, many hours trying to love *Gun Metal*, but in the end, I have to leave it. DH



Shifters

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: 3do
publisher: 3do
available: now

There's a lack of polish on display here, AI and collision problems, and the platforming is ugly, but this may be 3DO's best PS2 game yet. What they did get right, like lighting, textures, level design, expansive areas, and a fairly deep adventure, are all quite good. CG's nice too. I can't, for the life of me, understand why they don't tune their games; a little more time in the oven and *Shifters* could have been a contender. DH



Test Drive

play rating ●●●●●

system: xbox
developer: pitbull syndicate
publisher: infogrames
available: now

I think *Test Drive* is the first game that actually looks better on PS2. It's still the single most intense chase-racer to hit the pavement, with attitude to burn, mucho roads, a killer soundtrack, and inter-woven dialogue, but on the Xbox the Pong's not as good, and the chrome's not as shiny. I was expecting enhanced visuals but was instead greeted with a slightly less appealing-version compared to the PS2. DH



Monster Jam: Maximum Destruction

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: Inland Productions
publisher: Ubi Soft
available: now

As much as I hate to admit it, *Monster Truck Jam* is actually a fun vehicular slaughter fest, with an emphasis on the word slaughter, because once the guns run out, it's all in the rammin'. It's all about big-ass trucks, blazing sound effects, crazy locales, and doin' major damage—always cool to blow off a little steam. You won't see me at the Tractor Pulls or reachin' for the Skoal, but I like it. DH



Way of the Samurai

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: Spike
publisher: Bam!
available: now

Way of the Samurai is yet another quality acquisition from surprising BAM! The game features non-linear story lines based on the choices your Ninja makes and complex plots that unfold in real time, surrounded by beautiful graphics. An authentic Ninja adventure, once it draws you into its web of intrigue, there's no escape. DH



Bomberman Generations

play rating ●●●●●

system: gamecube
developer: hudson
publisher: majesco
available: august

If you're thinking about *Bomberman* for the classic multi-player, you're in luck, because it's great. There's nothing quite as satisfying as a good game of *Bomberman* among friends. The adventure game however, is soaked in Club Med tunes, predictable, by the numbers gameplay, and slow methodical pacing; in other words, it ain't the bomb. DH

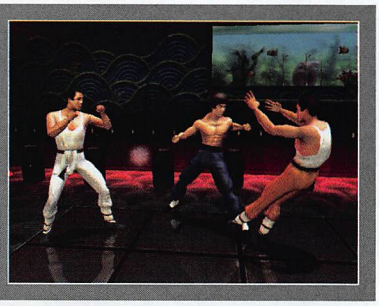


Bruce Lee: Quest of the Dragon

play rating ●●●●●

system: xbox
developer: ronin entertainment
publisher: universal Interactive
available: now

What it lacks in originality, *Bruce Lee* almost makes up for in personality, as Bruce himself is meticulously detailed, animated, and spoken. The graphics, however, are almost archaic for an Xbox fighter, with refresh running through the backgrounds like waves and an overall lack of visual stimuli. If you LOVE Bruce Lee, okay, if not—pass. DH



Pac-Man Fever

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: mass media
publisher: namco
available: now

Pac-Man Fever is no *Mario Party*, but it is a fun romp through an abbreviated Namco universe. Starring the likes of *Pac-Man*, *Astaroth*, and *Reiko Nagase*, this four-player board game boasts a decent selection of mini games (none of which approach the ingenuity of those found in the Mario Party series), but its simpler structure makes it a more instantly accessible game. MH



Ninja Assault

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: namco
publisher: namco
available: now

Here's what you need to know about Namco's latest light gun game: *Ninja Assault* is the best game of this kind since Sega's The House of the Dead 2. Pure, straightforward shooting action is what *Ninja Assault* is all about, with terrific enemy placement, tough bosses and pretty good graphics. This almost makes up for the disappointment of *Vampire Night*. MH

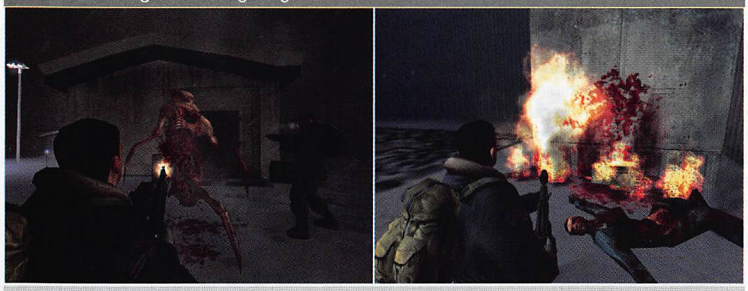


The Thing

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2, xbox
developer: computer artworks
publisher: universal interactive
available: now

What took so long? A premise so rich with possibility had to be poured into a game mold, yet perhaps only now is the time for *The Thing*, the video game, to become a proper, compelling adventure. Mood is its greatest strength. It may not be a technical marvel, but the game does involve you in its inhospitable setting. Abandoned on an enormous reserach site somewhere in the frozen wasteland, you are thrown into a situation that seems immediately hopeless. Part of the uniqely interesting setup involves the profound human emotion of trust, which must be earned between you and your team members by motions of good faith, like the exchange of a weapon or ammunition. Being forced to establish trust, as well as translate that trust into the progression of the gameplay, is an interesting dynamic, but here its focus is clunky, and the disparate connection to your teammates sabotages the elements the game does get right. BF



Gun Survivor: Dino Stalker

play rating ●●●●●

system: playstation 2
developer: capcom
publisher: capcom
available: now

I really respect the attempt to try something new in the highly regimented world of the light gun game, but Capcom's *Gun Survivor* misses the mark. Whereas most gun games have you fixed on rails, *Gun Survivor* allows freedom of movement with the Guncon 2's digital pad. The problem is, this idea just doesn't work, making the game feel like a really awkward first person shooter. MH



Men in Black II

play rating ●●●●●

system: ps2
developer: melbourne house
publisher: infogrames
available: now

In the tradition of bad video games coming out of OK movies, *Men in Black 2* is a very average shooter. It cranks up the action to the extreme, but the run-and-gun gameplay can't sustain an entire game, and the look is too generic to excite. Sometimes a mindless shooter does have an appeal, but Men in Black II needs more juice in its tank. BF



CASTLEVANIA BECKONS

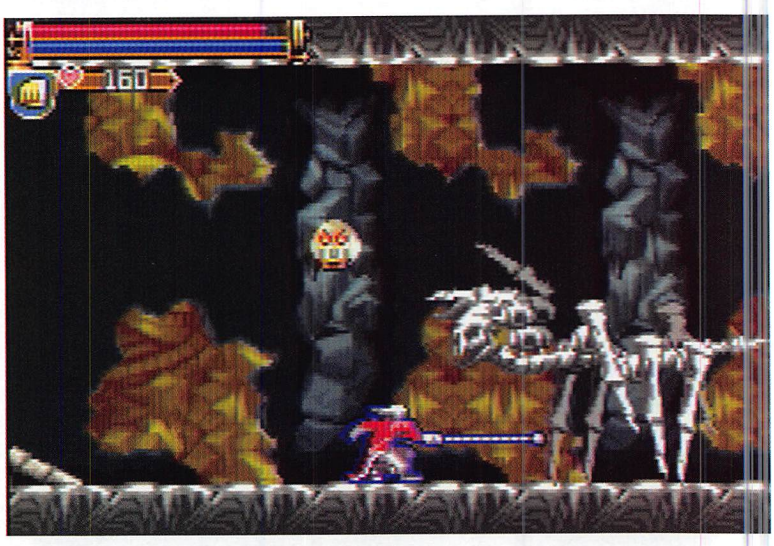
The latest in the Castlevania saga is among the greatest, as one of gaming's most stalwart series continues to flourish, bearing the sweet fruit of 2D

words dave halverson

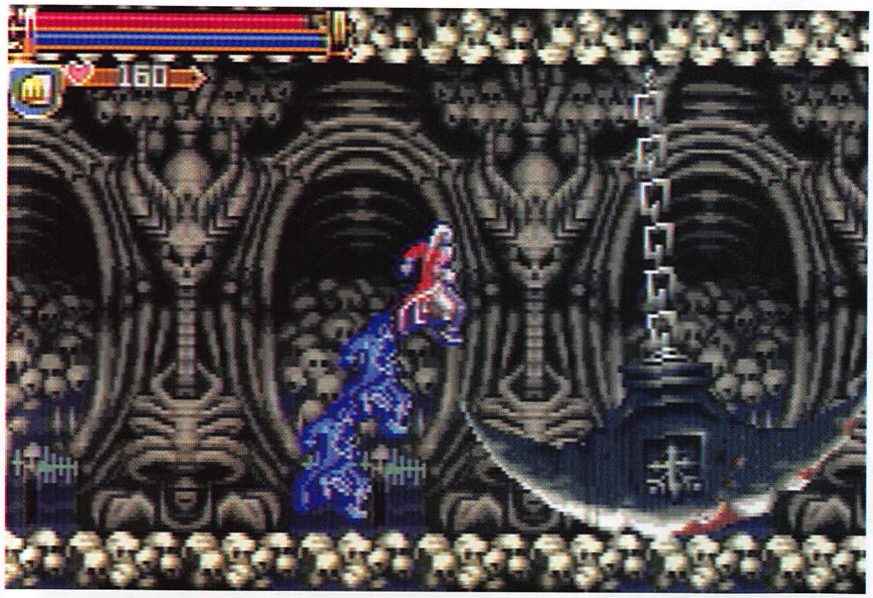
It is likely that anyone reading this places *Castlevania: Symphony of the Night* somewhere in his or her top-ten all-time greatest games list. The game gave and gave, and then turned itself inside out and gave some more. From the unforgettable music to the towering bosses and breathtaking character designs, it is a game that will live in the memories of those who experienced it for a lifetime. With side-scrollers now on the endangered species list of all three major platforms, we look to the Game Boy Advance to fulfill our old-school needs, and up until now (although the lack of a backlit version plagues all who hold it) it's been a steadfast system, often reminding us how great hand-drawn 2D can still be. It has also reminded us what rushed churned-out crap feels like—much like the days when 16-bit was such a hit-and-miss proposition, but that is a story for another day.

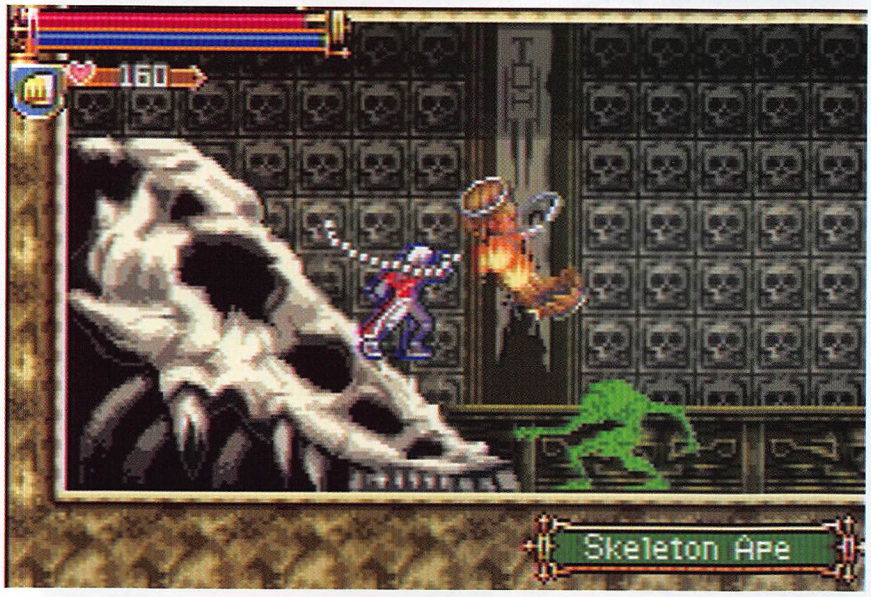
With *Castlevania Harmony of Dissonance*, the GBA reaches an entirely new plateau. As *Symphony* elevated the PlayStation's status, so will *Harmony* the GBA's. This game, sculpted by the very same individuals responsible for *Symphony*, is the epitome of what a handheld title can aspire to—a game you pray as you play it will never end. Combining elements from the Genesis Castlevania, *Bloodlines*—with its massive multi-jointed characters—and *Symphony*'s elegant art and framework, KCET has struck a balance that transcends the small screen, somehow causing the constraints of the system to fall away, a feat few games, if any, have been able to achieve on the system. Of course, in order to truly enjoy the game, you'll need a great light (see our Gear section, issue 007).

The lead character in this installment—which takes place 50 years after Simon Belmont vanquished Dracula—Juste Belmont, is drawn to the castle after his best friend, Maxim,













returns from training battered and bleeding, with news that Lydie, a mutual childhood friend, has been abducted and taken there. Arriving together, in classic fashion, Juste runs into the castle (okay, so he's chased), the drawbridge closes behind him, and Castlevania, once again, lies before you. Juste's not quite the spectacle that Alucard was—no character since has been, or likely ever will be—but he is shadowed by a similar glow and trail of silhouettes, enough to conjure memories of that most treasured moment, the first time you laid eyes on Alucard. From that moment forward, as you traverse that familiar first corridor, *Harmony* is a personal experience, akin to all of the best games in the series. Hitting pause

"JUSTE RUNS INTO THE CASTLE, THE DRAWBRIDGE CLOSES BEHIND HIM, AND CASTLEVANIA IS ON"

brings up an almost identical menu to *Symphony*'s, although the game's structure is perhaps even better (I know it's scary to think about, but it is). The music, as usual, crawls inside your brain and signs a lease, and dare I say, the enemies are the best the series has ever produced, save for the female-tailed reptile from *Symphony*'s outer corridor, which will never be beaten. It's hard to believe that in the current scheme of things there exists this stellar new 2D Castlevania that outshines *Circle of the Moon*, and approaches the majesty of *Symphony of the Night*, but it's here, it really is that good and, hey, isn't that a skeleton bone flying at your head? **play**

Whatever was in this room, Juste has killed it, making it extremely difficult to insert a caption

GBA

Castlevania: Harmony of Dissonance

developer: **kcet**
publisher: **kcea**
available: **august**

play rating ●●●●●

All hail the king of seamless side-scrolling action and adventure, and may its reign as such never end.



THE GREATER GHOUL

words michael hobbs

Capcom delivers the best possible version of Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts

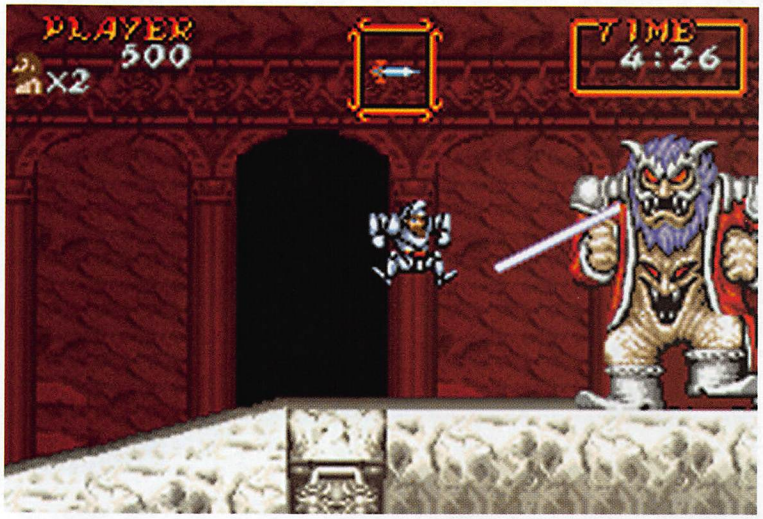




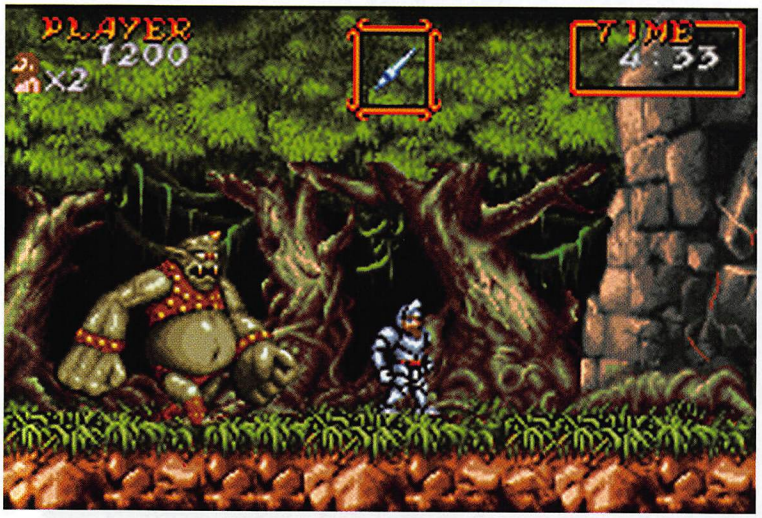
Pardon me while a wax nostalgic for a moment. I'll never forget the first time I played *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. Indeed, I'll never forget the first time I saw the box for the game. I thought, "This doesn't look a Nintendo game's box." I was a wee lad, and I thought at the time that there was nothing but Nintendo games on the NES. So the sight of this weird blue and red box piqued my interest. And then I looked at the shots of the back of the box and was floored. "Look at these graphics! This blows away Mario," I thought. And thus began a lifelong affinity for Capcom's hard-as-nails, truly awesome side-scrolling action platformer.

So here I am in 2002 playing a better than perfect version of the SNES' *Ghosts 'N Goblins* sequel, *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts*, and I couldn't be happier. Not only has the famous slow-down been neatly trimmed back from the SNES, the GBA game features an arranged mode which boasts level selection and all-new levels, some based on the original and arcade games. And what a fantastic looking game this is! On the little GBA screen, a masterful de-resing of the original has produced what I think is a more refined and lush looking presentation that marks it as one the best looking 2D GBA titles to date.

But it's the gameplay that gives *Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts* its meaning, and it's as awesome as ever. That is if you can still play older games, which require a level of hand-eye-coordination not often found in modern games. There's nothing forgiving about these types of 2D games. You either make the jump or not. There are no sissy ledge grabs or other benefits. You're pixel perfect or you're dead. When this style of game is well done, as it is here, this difficulty becomes deeply addictive (and sometimes infuriating), ensuring a genuine emotional response, the point of all forms of entertainment. **play**



"HERE I AM IN 2002 PLAYING A BETTER THAN PERFECT VERSION OF THE SNES GAME"





Does this not look even better that the SNES original? Perhaps not in absolute terms, but certainly in subjective terms.

GBA

Super Ghouls 'N Ghosts

developer: **capcom**
publisher: **capcom**
available: **now**

play rating ●●●●●

Being a huge fan of the 16-bit original, and indeed, the entire series, how could I not love this GBA version, which is more than perfect. It's actually better

advance notice

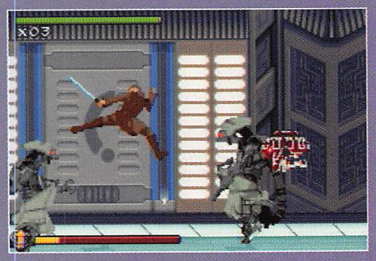
edited by dave halverson

Star Wars: Episode II - Attack of the Clones

play rating ●●●●●

developer: david a. palmer productions
publisher: thq
available: now

The Force didn't get anywhere near *E II*. This is one of those requisite franchise games that feels as if the people making it hated *Star Wars*, because honestly, it would be hard to make something much worse. You've got to put a measure of effort into oversized, lumbering characters with such a lack of connectivity. The 3D levels aren't enough to save this one from the dark side of the discount bin.



Frogger Advance: The Great Quest

play rating ●●●●●

developer: vicarious visions
publisher: konami
available: now

The little green sprite we used to navigate through traffic and over logs is frogus-erectus. The wart giver's first foray into side-scrolling is an impressive-looking storybook action/platformer aimed squarely at the 12 and under market. The by-the-numbers gameplay is well produced and packaged, with solid control, excellent animation, and a fittingly cute soundtrack.



Punch Out King

play rating ●●●●●

developer: full fat
publisher: acclaim
available: now

Punch Out fans rejoice! Punch-Out fans... Punch Out fans... Acclaim has taken the once-spellbinding formula and given it the full GBA treatment, creating a game that plays, looks, and sounds better. Cool comic book still-frames tie it all together via comments from your corner and pre-fight trash talk, then color commentary paints the picture as you brave each increasingly more difficult opponent in the ring.



Lilo & Stitch

play rating ●●●●●

developer: digital eclipse
publisher: disney interactive
available: august

It says *Lilo & Stitch* on the box but this game is made for seasoned gamers, and those kids with exceptional skills. Either way I'll take it. The shooting action with Stitch is beautiful, followed by puzzle-action gameplay starring Lilo that'll make you want your SNES back, and space shooting that's totally retro cool. Animation, music, gameplay, control—*Lilo & Stitch* is the kind of game the GBA was made for.



Shantae (GBC)

play rating ●●●●●

developer: wayforward technologies
publisher: capcom
available: now

How can it be that a Game Boy Color game is better than 90% of the GBA games out there? Well, for starters it's from Wayforward Technologies, the emerging super developer on the portable game scene. In addition, it's comprised of brilliantly executed 2D action—rich in animation, art, and captivating gameplay. Plus, Shantae is just too cool. With any luck, they're working on a GBA sequel.



Earthworm Jim 2

play rating ●●●●●

developer: super empire
publisher: majesco
available: now

What did poor Jim do to deserve two awful ports? I mean, this is one of 16-bits most beloved characters, reduced to mere bait for critical battery. *EWJ 2*'s blown-out colors only add insult to the injury that are the physics. Jim feels utterly wrong, too heavy, and too fast, and there's slow-down. Doesn't anyone, anywhere, give a rat's-ass about this franchise anymore? I know I do...or did. Ah, what's the use.



Nicktoons Racing

play rating ●●●●●

developer: crawfish interactive
publisher: infogrames
available: now

Er, why is *Nicktoons Racing* the best Mode 7 racer on the GBA? Can anybody tell me that...anybody? Oh well, hey! Look at this! We are talkin' one buttocks-kicking cart racer here people. For starters, and this is all I really need, you can play as Stimpy (!) driving his cat box! The game is also gorgeous (by 3D GBA standards), has all the prerequisite cart stuff, and the funky toon vibe fits like a glove.



Mega Man Battle Network 2

play rating ●●●●●

developer: capcom
publisher: capcom
available: now

Net 2's real-world adventure and cyber-world action are simply gorgeous, displaying characters in the Capcom tradition, with brilliant detail and vivid backgrounds. The story, which takes place jacking in and out of the Net, fighting the World Three Organization, is driven by the innovative PET and Net Navi system, the conduit for everything from virus busting to sending emails. This is pure Capcom magic.



back issues



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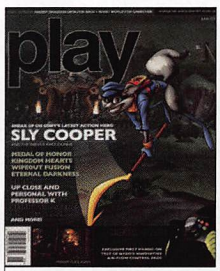
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DEATH AND REBIRTH

The first half of the anime event of the year has finally arrived...

words dave halverson



"I URGE YOU, IF YOU HAVEN'T HAD THE EVANGELION EXPERIENCE NOW IS THE PERFECT TIME"



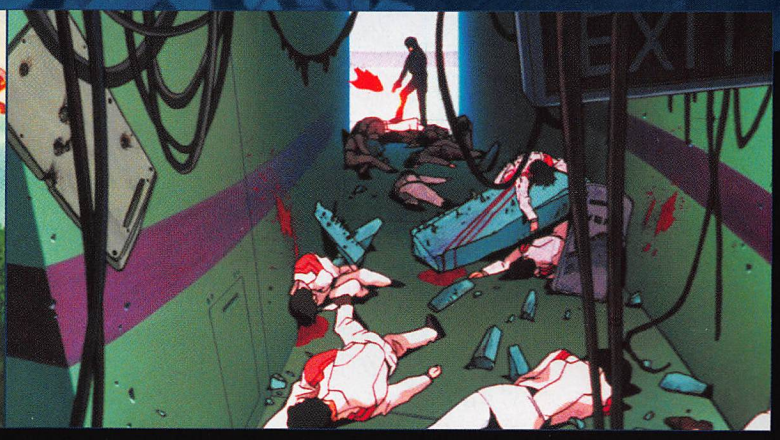
You can't watch *Evangelion Death & Rebirth* if you haven't earned the right, by watching the entire series--by waiting and wondering month after month if the answers will finally come. Of course, you can, there's no physical restriction opposing you, but you will be lost. Instead of being moved, as perhaps you have never been, you will be utterly confused, like a man who has just walked into the ladies restroom. Although it is a huge investment of time, I urge you, if you haven't had the Evangelion experience, now is the perfect time--due to the arrival of Death & Rebirth. Honestly, I wish that I'd have waited; in fact, I'd rather be waiting still, as Death & Rebirth still offers no conclusion, no "answer".

I watched the *Eva* series on video years ago, and have waited patiently, resisting the temptation of watching any false version, until it was in its proper U.S. form—Gainax-approved in a package from Manga. The ultimate-case scenario would be to have the entire series on DVD, *Death & Rebirth*, and *The End of Evangelion*, which Manga will release in September, all sitting in front of you, and just take a week off to sift though the entire collection. As it stands, having watched *Death & Rebirth*, I am more troubled than ever, but I suppose that's a good thing. Why all the introspection about what amounts to essentially a cartoon? Well, let's stop there. Anime can resemble cartoons—America's hand-drawn farces made to quell rowdy children and provide quality entertainment for pot smokers—but anime is a substantially elevated art form, even compared to American cinema. It is the perception of culture, exaggerated, celebrated, sent up, and at times dumped back in our faces, to show us how stupid, greedy, funny, pathetic, and fragile we can be. Moreover, it's produced by a people (the Japanese) who care deeply about their work, who still take time to think, and soul search—to drink of life beyond sitting in traffic and then watching *Friends* on TV. They truly have a sense of honor and pride. You don't see a sports star making a 100 million a year down the street from a family living in a box. Yeah, they smoke a lot and appear "wacky" at times, but that's just a cover. If you play games and watch anime, you know what I'm talking about. Why do you think all of the really smart people watch anime and play video games? Anyway, before I get off on a rant (there's that damn Miller gene again), let me simply state that *Evangelion* is a canvas, its characters and subjects drawn, because no actor or special effects could ever portray them or these events. Gainax—the animation studio that gave us *Wings of Honneamise* (also life altering), *The Secret of Blue Water, Gunbuster* and (if it ever gets here) *FLCL*—is the vessel for a message that's a window into our humanity, and possibly our fate as a result of our ultimate sin. Woo, heavy shit!

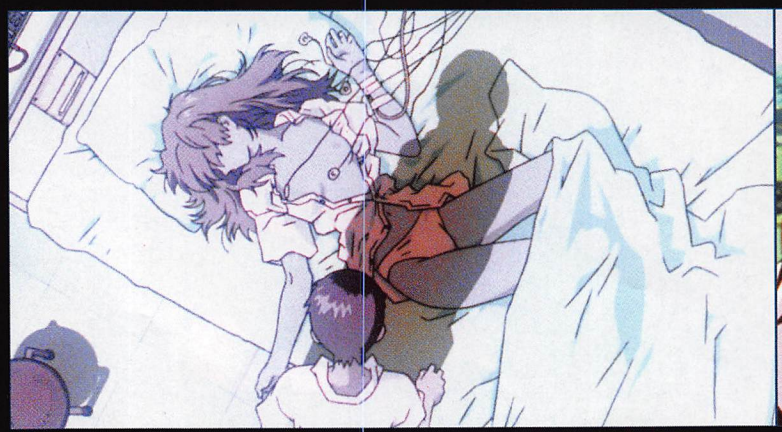
Okay, onto the actual disc, at least as much as you should know about it, if you have been patient like me. Death has been called a collection of scenes from the original series, which it is, although it is orchestrated in such a way as to become more of a window into the minds of the creators. They have orchestrated each scene like a fine symphony, providing brief glimpses of poignant moments interrupted by the most compelling scenes—scenes you might have only partially registered the first time you saw them; like Unit 02's amazing sea battle, Asuka and Rei in the Nerv elevator, or Shinji's awkward naked encounter with Rei. They are assembled in such a way that after the intermission (great touch), *Rebirth* seems to broadcast directly into your soul. "How can this be happening? What the..." I thought. It is an amazing feeling. The only problem is that just like the series, it ends on an almost inhumane cliffhanger. Perhaps the most disturbing scene I have ever seen unfolds as

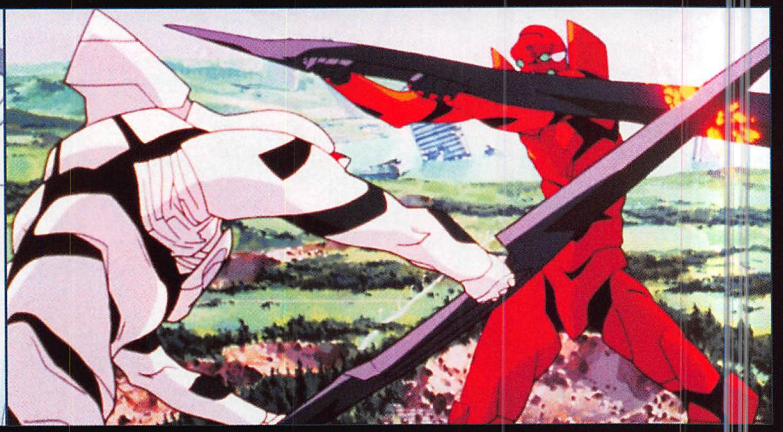
"REBIRTH SEEMS TO BROADCAST DIRECTLY INTO YOUR SOUL"






NEON GENESIS
EVANGELION











Shinji stands over Asuka's limp, naked, almost comatose body in the infirmary, after the cataclysmic events surrounding the fourth child. These kids, especially him, are, at this point, completely f----d up, and this scene destroys you. Forced evolution, playing God, manufacturing life, playing a game with the whole of humanity hanging in the balance, all cast on severely emotionally wounded children—what could be more profound?

Manga has done a wonderful job with the disc, with haunting animated menus accompanied by Shinji's lone cello, and a selection of extras that further shine a light on the content—content that can and will be perceived in many ways. You may want to resist the *End of Evangelion* trailer though; it's, like, total overload.

When all is said and done, as many people as possible should experience this series one way or another, and *Death & Rebirth* creates the opportunity of doing so without spending your vacation time. So, I suppose if you must, begin here. It will either compel you to dig further or perhaps think I'm insane; either way, there's no denying, *Evangelion* isn't just great anime, it's one of the finest achievements in the history of visual entertainment. **play**

"FORCED EVOLUTION, PLAYING GOD, MANUFACTURING LIFE, PLAYING A GAME WITH THE WHOLE OF HUMANITY— WHAT COULD BE MORE PROFOUND?"

EVANGELION: DEATH & REBIRTH

studio: **manga entertainment** rating: **17 & up** running time: **90 mins**

extras: Audio Commentary; Original Japanese Trailer; "End of Evangelion" Preview; Japanese Production Credits; Photo Gallery; In-Depth Index of Characters, Angels, Evas and Terms; Mokuji Interactive Information; Magi Archives

play score

DEVILS MAY CRY

ADV celebrates 10 great years with a new look at their shapely devil hunter who helped start it all

words dave halverson

What better way to celebrate their 10th anniversary than with a complete collection of the title that started it all, *Devil Hunter Yohko*. Although I expected more goodies inside the case, like a poster of the gorgeous new Yohko art or some kind of special book, the DVD itself delivers a mega-dose of the title that would spawn countless imitations; anime heroines have been shedding their clothes in a spinning naked rage ever since. Before we even get to *Yohko*'s rather understated menu, we're treated to a look at 3D software gone by, via all four versions of the ADV logo. Luckily, Yohko has aged much, much better; there's one on disc two I don't even remember. Most notable on the DVD is the new Special Edition version, a dubbed, painstakingly cleaned-up transfer that breathes new life into the timeless demon-slaying action and comedy. In contrast, the original subtitled version, available in its original form, acts as a stunning barometer. The two-disc set also contains a historical commentary chronicling the birth of ADV, which gives some interesting insight as to how far anime has come in the U.S. over the past decade, and one of the greatest success stories in media, considering the company's humble beginnings and current status. For the uninitiated, Yohko finds out on her 16th birthday that she's the 108th generation in a family of devil hunters, meaning that from now on, demons will want to either screw her or eat her or screw her, then eat her... Either way, it's a real pain in the neck that sort of gets in the way of losing her virginity, continuing a normal relationship with mother and grandmother, or having a life. *Yohko* launched stateside just as I began to become fascinated with anime, which at the time was an *expensive* (laser disc's for sale!) hobby, making her my first in many ways; first nude transformation, first animated sex scene, and shortly thereafter, she became the first anime heroine with her own 16-bit video game, which I played to death, and then some more. You'll have to look for that on ebay, and pick up a Mega Drive while you're at it, but you can buy this exceptional compilation right now at a store near you, which, before *Yohko*, you actually couldn't do.



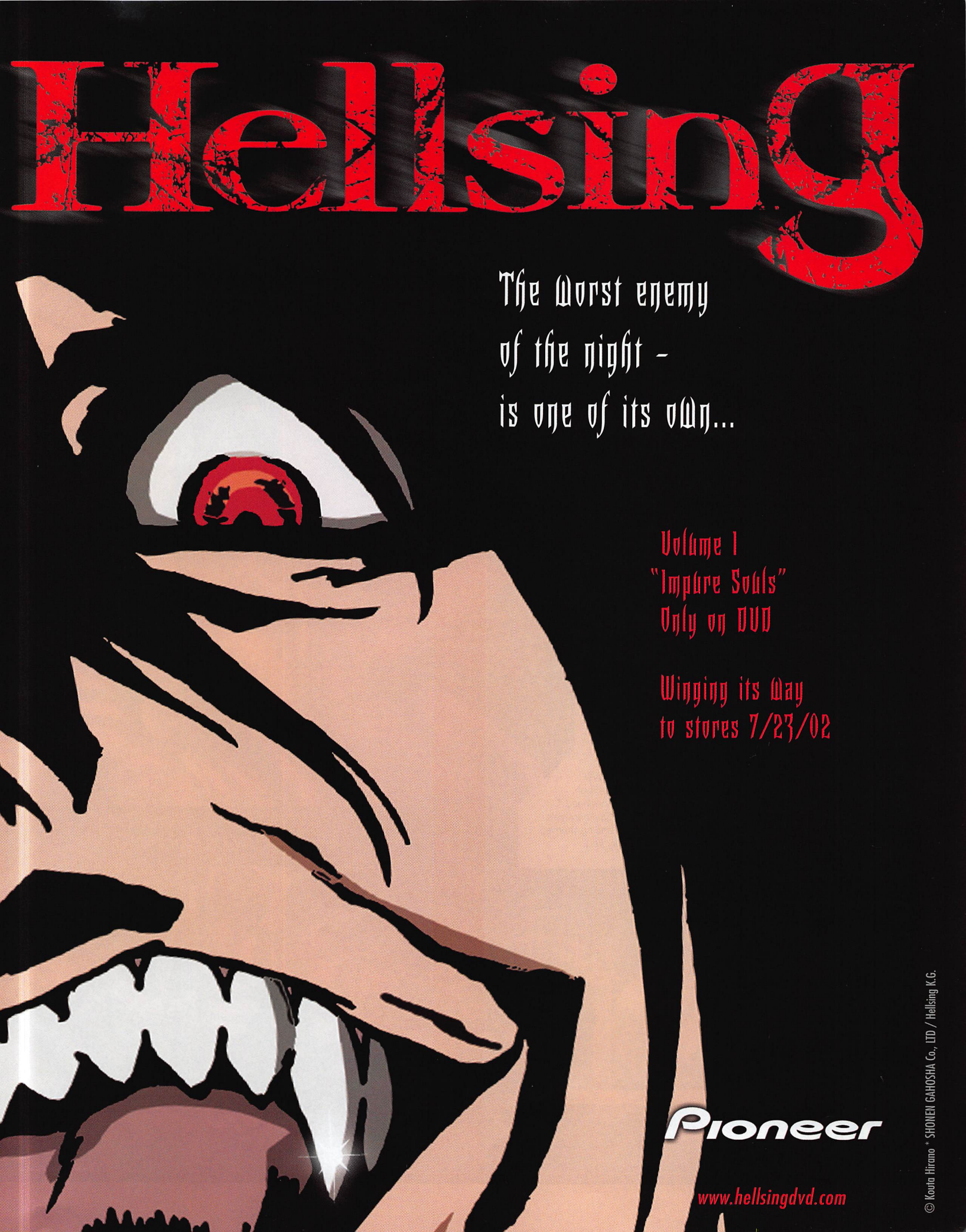


DEVIL HUNTER YOHKO: COLLECTION 1

studio: **adv films** rating: **17 & up** running time: **105 mins**

extras: Japanese Language, English Language, English Subtitles. Original and special editions of episode one,Yohko trailers, artwork, music video, ADV historical commentary by Matt Greenfield/David Williams/Janice Williams

play score


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Katsumi Liqeur rides again on DVD, taking on the Lucifer Hawk and her own haunting secret...



words dave halverson

Ever notice how the best anime involves normal (young, beautiful) people thrown into extraordinary situations? Katsumi Liqeur is one such heroine. Sent for by the detective investigating the events surrounding her mother's death, Katsumi is summoned to Japan by Rally Cheyenne, whose AMP (Attacked Mystification Police) are charged with ridding the world of the Lucifer Hawk—an alien race that slipped through a rift that Katsumi's father, the sorcerer Gigelf, failed to seal some 20 years prior. Katsumi thinks she's going to find the answers she's seeking about her mother's death, but when the private jet she's flying on ends up in bite-sized chunks on the runway, and she is unscathed, the brunt of the situation begins to sink in. No sooner, she is confronted by the beings she has been summoned to protect humanity from—powerful life forms with cunning intellect and magic prowess beyond comprehension. The death of Katsumi's mother had a direct coloration with her survival to this point. Katsumi's bloodline, combined with the blade her mother left her for protection, makes her the invading race's most lethal opponent. In lieu of signing up as their "key," Katsumi reluctantly takes her place as the AMP's most powerful magic user and begins to emit crop circles and melt aliens like grilled cheese. More like the Manga than either of the two *Silent Mobius* movies, what the 26-episode TV series lacks in animation comparatively (although it's beautiful for a TV series) it makes up for in character development. The nine-episode two-disc DVD contains a mini-comic, a pull-out poster, the transfer is ultra-clean, and the dub, if you care, is quite good, save for the word "bonehead." The character designs and art (faithful representations of Kia Asamiya's originals) are reminiscent of the best Western Sci-Fi, and the ending theme song borders on la-la land. If you missed it on VHS, well, lucky you.

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SILENT MOBIUS vol.1

studio: **bandai entertainment** rating: **13 & up** running time: **225 min.**

extras Japanese and English audio, interactive animated menus, English subtitles, textless opening, reversible cover

play score



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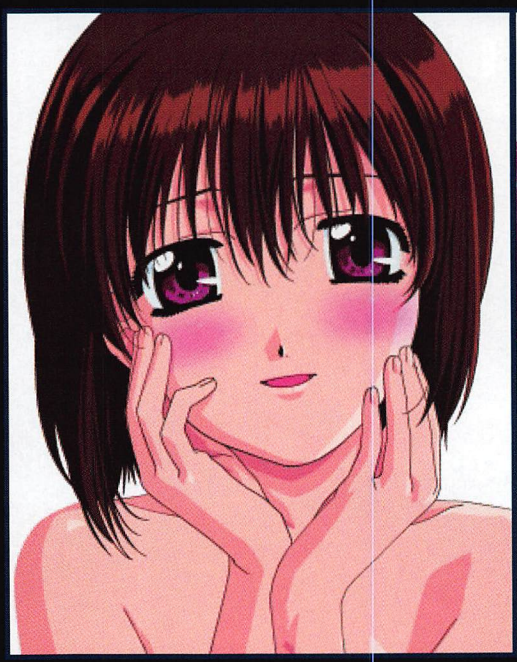
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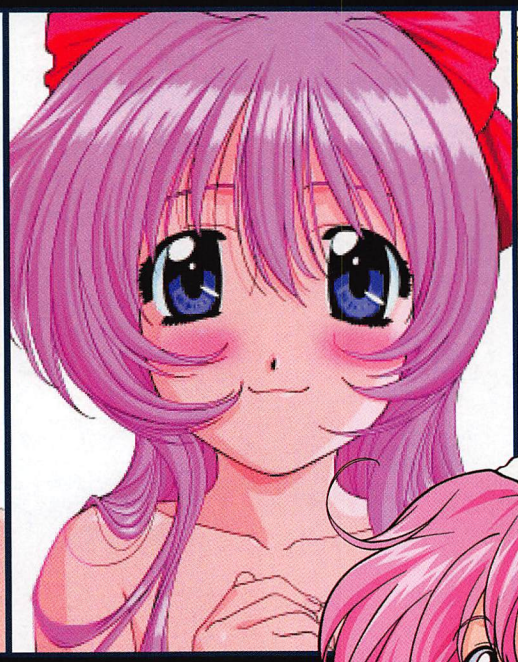
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CYBER ANGELIC

ADV's stunning new series just gets better and better

words dave halverson









Volume two of *Steel Angel Kurumi: The Trouble With Angels* begins with a solemn soliloquy, and then slips into that gentle, peaceful piano solo as the gears on the menu slowly spin... Wake up! There's trouble afoot! Brutal battles, intense drama, and love, love, love await. Pay attention, watch in a brightly lit room, and sit far enough from the screen, as Kurumi, Nakahito, Saki, and Dr. Amagi begin the long journey to her creator's lab; and if you can maintain any kind of self-control during the opening theme song, do clue me in, because I think I'm a freak. Among many, many other things in volume two, Nakahito begins to really warm up to Kasumi's advances (lucky little bastard), Saki's lesbian love begins to boil, and we discover that Kurumi can throw a fireball that would make Ryu run for the hills and catch catfish with her finger! Above all, in what is shaping up to be an extraordinary series, one thing is made perfectly clear; *Steel Angel Kurumi* can and will go from dizzyingly cute to dark and viciously brutal without warning, and to great, almost brilliant effect. I don't think I've ever witnessed a contrast so bold and, therefore, appealing. I mean, one minute Nakahito and Kurumi are exploring butterflies-in-your-stomach, squishy-cute puppy love, and the next three assassins are picking her apart like scrap metal, with the intent purpose of murdering her right in front of him. At one point Saki is mangled and propped up on a cross like Jesus, then waved around like an appetizer—real friendly these Angels. Before the second 90 minutes are up, we also meet four new angels, one of which, Karinka, has two hearts and no remorse, making her one evil bitch of an android. I laughed, I cried, I wanted more. *Steel Angel Kurumi* is awesome.





STEEL ANGEL KURUMI vol.2

studio: **adv films** rating: **17 & up** running time: **90 mins**

extras Translator notes, Saki fortune teller, extended episode previews, English & Japanese language, Steel Angels photo shoot, original cover artwork, original manga covers, original US teaser, production sketches

play score

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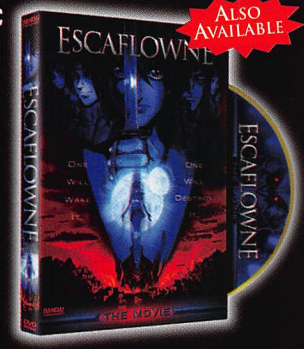
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CHAR BROILED

Attention all planets of the Solar Federation... Char's pissed, and he's got an asteroid!

words dave halverson

If *Gundam* is to anime what the *Star Wars* saga is to cinema, you might consider *Char's Counterattack* on par with George Lucas' original. It takes place somewhere in the middle of the chronology, incorporates the series' main opposing forces, and it is both epic in scope and highly stylized, containing a first-rate symphonic score, compelling writing and performances, and it manages to make you care about fictional and, in this case, animated characters. Fourteen years after the One Year War, which killed off half of the Earth's population, Char Aznable (Vader sans plastic) and Amuro Ray (Luke sans boyish grin) are once again locked in heated battle. Char has commandeered an asteroid, the 5th Luna, and sent it on a crash course with Earth, hoping that its impact will create a nuclear winter, thus forcing all of mankind into space and fulfilling his father's vision. Amuro Ray, meanwhile, is about to take the maiden voyage in his Nu Gundam, fitted with technology he passed on to the R&D team at Londo Bell, the fleet HQ. Computer chips the size of metal particles have been integrated into the frame to speed the suit's reaction time, and he's ready to pound the red off some Zeon. The stage is set for a major confrontation with the planet hanging in the balance; cue the scaling text and massive space cruisers. As beautiful and compelling an old-school space opera you will ever see, *Char's Counterattack* is absolute requisite viewing for Gundam aficionados and sci-fi fans alike, and the special-edition DVD is packed with features.





MS GUNDAM: CHAR'S COUNTERATTACK

studio: **bandai entertainment** rating: **13 & up** running time: **124 mine**

extras Anamorphic widescreen, 5.1 dolby japanese & english, original theatrical trailer, gundam model music video, creator filmography, 12-page booklet, reversible cover

play score

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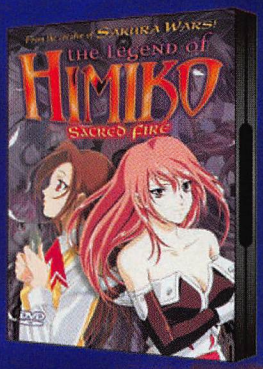
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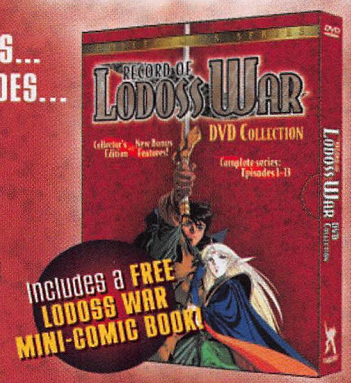
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LONELY SOUL

Kyosuke Date meets a flicker of his real mother, and faces his most powerful opponent yet, as we draw closer to the truth

words dave halverson

Since when do anime series get better as they progress? It has always been my experience that they slowly degrade as the directors, producers, and animators begin thinking about the next project down the line, or as the budget runs out. Not so with *SoulTaker: Blood Betrayal*. The third volume in the series opens with animation on par with Kyosuke's extraordinary first battle with a hospital mutant, as a pack of Zombie nurses emerges out of a shallow river (interrupting the reunion with his birth mother Tsubaki Tokisaka) and commence pelting them both with lethal hypodermic needles; this actually will hurt a bit. Even though Tsubaki is a flicker created by Runa, she possesses real feelings and we begin to gain some genuine insight into what is really going on in Kyosuke's twisted after-life. Later, in episode 09, (and by now your brain has started to go numb trying to process information), which unfolds on the threshold of Kirihara's towering fortress, things get really interesting when the SoulAnubis is unleashed, looking like a cross between Sil from *Species* and the *Metropolis* android. Once its inner human is revealed, *SoulTaker* begins its final decent into a climax that promises to be nothing short of biblical.





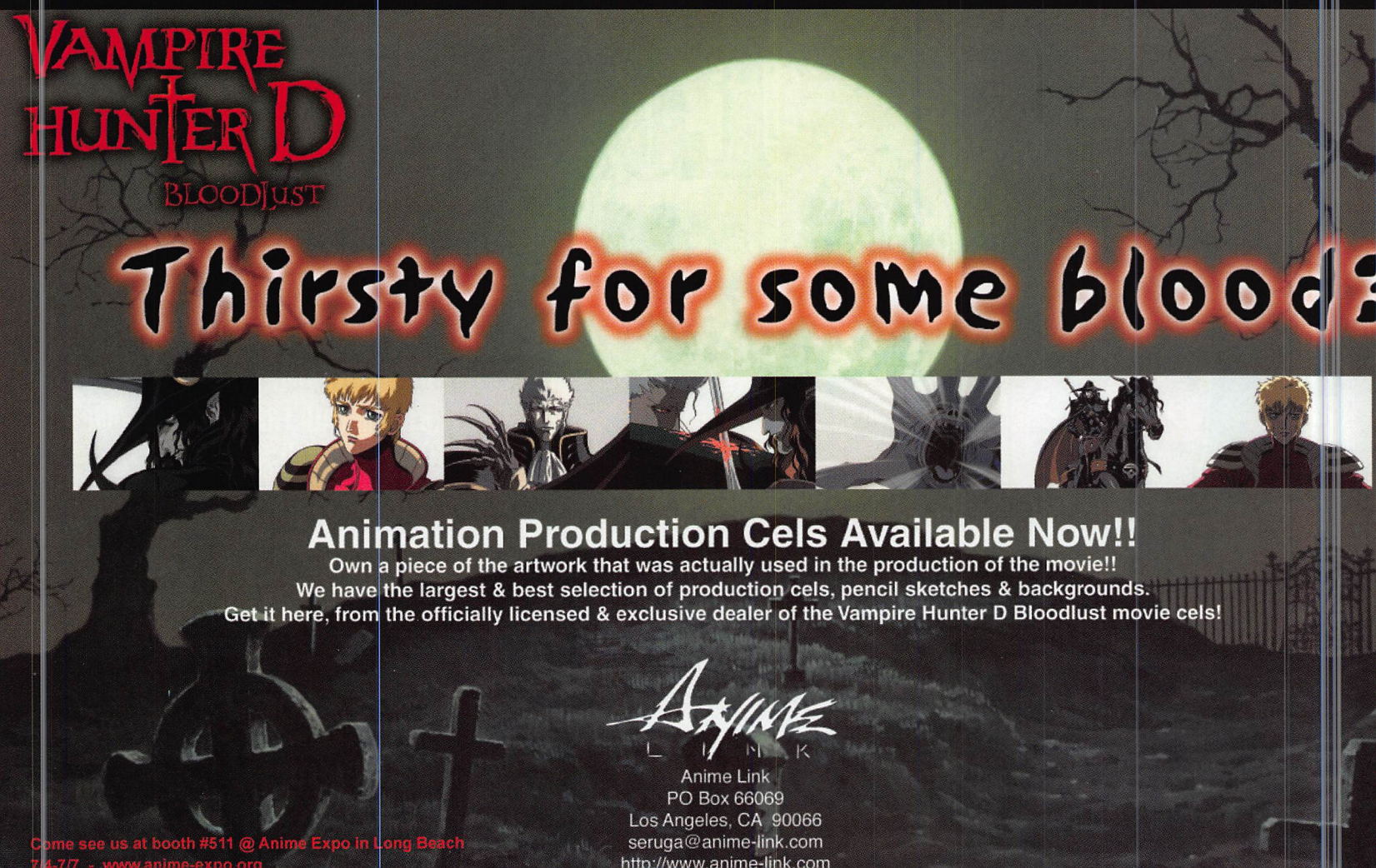


SOUL TAKER: BLOOD BETRAYAL

studio: **pioneer entertainment** rating: **16 & up** running time: **75 mins**

extras Anamorphic widescreen, bilingual audio, english subtitles, cutting-edge motion menu, art gallery, introduction of soultaker halloween mask, non-credit opening with sing-along

play score



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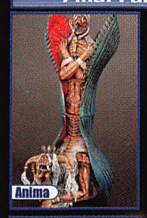
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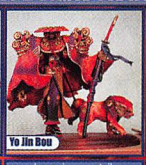


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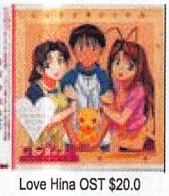
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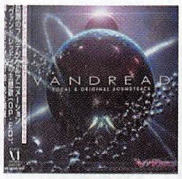
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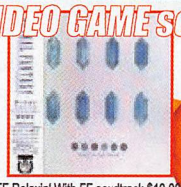
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FAST TRACKS

One of Masamune Shirow's best, *New Dominion Tank Police* hasn't made its way to DVD...yet



words dave halverson

Beginning this month (obviously), we'll be bringing you what's left of the cream of the crop, still unavailable on DVD, in the hopes that their respective benefactors will hear our call, starting with one we're pretty sure is imminent, Masamune Shirow's *New Dominion Tank Police*. If by some odd circumstance you haven't seen this series, by all means dust off the VCR and give it a go. Taking place in Kobe Japan, 2100 AD, the series follows the exploits of an elite (and very destructive) Tank Police Division assembled to deal with the heinous amount of crime in the city, ranging from terrorism to a murder every 30 seconds, kind of like *Robocop*'s Old Detroit (or Los Angeles). The squad is lead by an archetypical Shirow heroine, the feisty Leona, and her tank Bonepart, who have no regard for public property when it comes to chasing down the bad guys, inflicting maximum punishment in the process. The six-episode OAV (which will fit nicely on two discs) covers everything from Dept. corruption to terrorism, kidnapping, and essentially anything else that's ever plagued a fictional futuristic city. Best of all, the character designs, animation, and overall production are vintage Shirow, at the top of his game. *New Dominion Tank Police* was originally released on VHS in 1995.

NEW DOMINION: TANK POLICE

studio: **manga entertainment** rating: **13 & up** running time: **approximately 270 mins**

extras: N/A

play score



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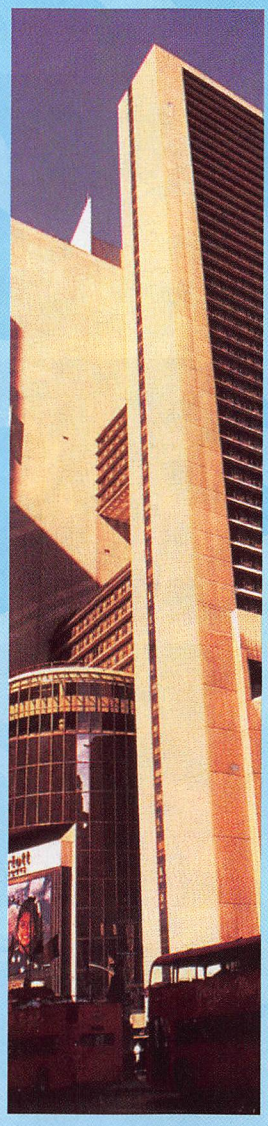
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In anime news: Manga Entertainment is currently co-producing the next **Street Fighter Alpha** movie, which will begin production this summer, hopefully to be completed by summer 2003. Originally previewed in Play Volume 4, Gainax' **FLCL** has since endured a shift in publishers and cast members, leading to several delays, the most recent of which has it finally arriving August 13th rather than June 25th, as previously stated by Synch-Point, the series' new benefactor. Apparently, a video glitch in the master tape is the culprit. The company is very focused on a quality DVD which will include the first two of six OAVs, a commentary track from director Kazuya Tsurumaki, a reversible cover, and a bonus booklet with extra information about **FLCL,** including liner notes, background, and special manga information.

The NTV network in Japan will air the next *Lupin* special, a prequel called **Lupin the Third: Episode 0: First Contact**, July 26th. The show portrays Lupin as a rookie thief after a mysterious book of Alchemy in the possession of the Mafia. The book contains a process to make a special metal alloy, harder than a diamond, but as practical as any metal—the hook being that the book itself is encased in the metal with no apparent lock or key. Studio Proteus has reported that **Ghost in the Shell 2: Man-Machine Interface**, scheduled for release in October, 2002, may include both "standard" and "adult" versions of the books. Masamune Shirow hasn't made the final decision yet, but is said to be "waffling." He modified the pages from the limited hardcover release for the mass-market paperback in Japan, and at first, he seemed amenable to letting us do a version with the original images, said Studio Proteus, the book's translators—but now he's not sure. He seems to feel he may have gone a bit too far in the hardcover. At this point, all we can do is wait and see what he decides

In video-game anime news: Bandai has announced that the first of four sequential **.Hack** action-RPGs for the PS2, will be released in America this October. The first game sold 120,000 copies in four days in Japan where the TV series, also coming to America (!) is currently all the rage. Konami has announced that it is currently at work on a 3D soccer game for the GameCube titled **Captain Tsubasa: Golden Generation Challenge,** based on the popular *Captain Tsubasa* manga and anime series.

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play media
review legend
perfect
stellar
great
good
average
poor

THE TIME MACHINE



DREAMWORKS
RATEDPG-13

Movies like *The Time Machine* are a total mystery. It's not the premise, acting or special effects—all are excellent; it's the depressing box office take that astounds. With Guy Pearce (*Memento*, *L.A. Confidential*) donning the role of Professor Alexander Hartdegen, a character that doesn't wander off-screen for more than 30 seconds, it's easy to remain intrigued through the entire ride. Because *Time Machine* is just that: an epic, rip-roaring ride in which your imagination will frolic. Though it kicks off to a somewhat lagging, lethargic beginning—in which Hartdegen's fiancée, Emma, is introduced, charming the audience with big smiles and a few bits of dialogue—the film doesn't linger long. Her murder, caused by a mugger's bullet, is the professor's motivation to take his theories of time travel and actually apply them to his dilemma. Three years later, after sipping on an endless pot of coffee and rarely changing clothes, a rough-edged Hartdegen emerges from his warehouse of gadgets with a massive, spherical contraption that he hopes will help him bring back his lovely Emma. But when he jumps back into the past, even though he drags her away from her bullet-wound demise, he is shocked to discover that no matter how many times he saves her, she will die another way; destiny, as much as he strives to revise it, is a *real* bitch. Thus the adventure portion of H.G. Wells' classic swoops in as Hartdegen, always hungry for knowledge, vows to find out why he can't manipulate the past. Sci-fi aficionados, hold tight: For the first major time thrust sequence, Industrial Light & Magic and Digital Domain deserve a special achievement award. Gently sliding the machine's ignition lever forward, the camera slowly pans around Hartdegen's mammoth workroom. Day and night casually flash by outside the greenhouse window; and as the machine gradually speeds up, ivy invades the glass panes and snow moves in to kill it—summer and winter in a matter of seconds. Then, punching the gas a bit more, we witness Hartdegen's lab transform into a storehouse for Model Ts and wooden crates. It's an awe-inspiring sequence that demands admiration; sit back on your couch and take in the sights. There's plenty more as the film continues, including the creative creature make-up by Stan Winston Studios for the futuristic Morlock race. It's constructed like a summer blockbuster, yet it fell far below; *The Time Machine* truly is a testament to the festivity of movie-making.

VALUE: Director Simon Wells, great-grandson to H.G., supplies a wonderful commentary along with editor Wayne Wahrman; and producer David Valdes, production designer Oliver Scholl, and digital effects supervisor Jamie Price contribute to a second, full-length audio track. "Building the Time Machine" taps into the overall "making-of" aspects of the film, while "Creating the Morlocks" and "Visuals Effects by Digital Domain" probe into the more visceral portions of the feature—of which, there are plenty. A bulky conceptual section, full of design sketches, the chase sequence breakdown, and a deleted scene (which is actually quite engaging) round out the package. Dig in—over and over again.

JON M GIBSON

movie ●●●●○
dvd ●●●●○

AMELIE



MIRAMAX
RATED R

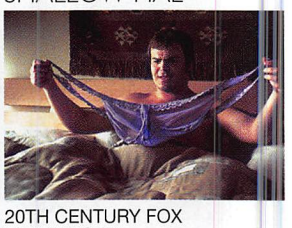
From the very moment Audrey Tautou's adorable face pops onto the screen, you'll be trapped forever in her wide-eye gaze. She is the epitome of charming—that bewitching actress you discover *oh* so rarely. As Amelie—in *Amelie*—she is captivated by the peculiar; more importantly, it is the goal she sets forth at the start of the film that drives the whole movie: to remedy the lives of the unhappy. Her widowed father yearns to travel, so to inspire the old man she mails his garden gnome around the world (throughout the movie, he receives snapshots of the little guy in Paris, Rome—all over); and to punish a local grocer who is mean to his assistant, she reverses his doorknobs and reprograms his speed dial. Beaming with imagination from director Jean-Pierre Jeunet (who brought his overwhelming, striking cinematography to *Alien Resurrection*, *The City of Lost Children*, *Delicatessen*), *Amelie* is perhaps the most quirky, most visually enjoyable film ever made. It's highly intoxicating no matter how it's viewed, whether for its romantic sparks or enchanting, quick-cut spurs of humor. Everyone should be delighted, even beyond expectations.

VALUE: Fans should be infinitely pleased: This two-disc edition of *Amelie* doesn't skimp on extras. There's nearly half a dozen featurettes, a commentary by Jeunet, and even the audition tapes. Excellent, all around.

JON M GIBSON

movie ●●●●●
dvd ●●●●●

SHALLOW HAL



20TH CENTURY FOX
RATED PG-13

People expecting the usual Farrelly Brothers brand of crude and twisted humor from past films such as *There's Something About Mary* and *Dumb and Dumber* are in for a little dose of reality with their latest, *Shallow Hal*. Hal (Jack Black) is like all of us—well, most of us. He only chooses his women based on their outer appearance, for their shapely bodies more than brains. But when he meets infomercial king Tony Robbins, the self-help guru bestows a special gift to Hal, the ability to see only the inner beauty of the female half. Enter Rosemary (Gwyneth Paltrow), who to everyone else is a king-sized hippo; but to Hal, she is perfection. Overall, the story works (albeit the preachy ending); and a bit forced at some parts, it still manages to succeed with some quality Farrelly-esque humor throughout (even though it *is* a bit "watered" down). Viewers looking for crude, fat people jokes involving flatulence, excessive burping and gross-out bodily fluids gags should look elsewhere.

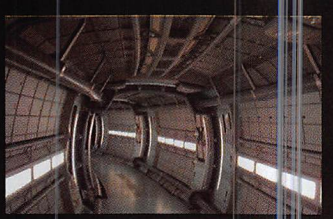
VALUE: This is an extra-packed DVD. The commentary with the Farrelly's is quite funny and the "making-of" video (showing how the special effects team created Paltrow's fat costume) is pretty amazing. There are 11 deleted scenes with commentary, as well as an Easter Egg showing how they made the wagging tail in the movie. Don't ask... you just have to see for yourself.

TOM HAM

movie ●●●●○
dvd ●●●●○

NEWSBYTES

Clash of the titans: **New Line and Avery Pictures have finally greenlit the much-rumored *Freddy vs. Jason***, set to begin shooting on September 9. The casting notices for the movie carried this tagline: "Forget *Godzilla vs. King Kong*—this is the horror clash of them all!" . . . Angry Indy: Harrison Ford recently told *Playboy* that he'd never condone producers Steven Spielberg or George Lucas replacing him in the upcoming *Indiana Jones 4*: "First I'd tell them to go f—k themselves, then I'd kill them. I'd kill them". . . Kong again: **Peter (*Lord of the Rings*) Jackson has reportedly expressed interest in pursuing a remake of Universal's legendary monster movie, *King Kong*** . . . Jolie jollies: The next big screen installment of the saga of Lara Croft has tentatively been dubbed *Tomb Raider and the Cradle of Life*. An early draft of the script was reviewed by *Coming Attractions* recently, observing that **the sequel "...focuses on Lara kick-**



On set: An ominous hallway from *Solaris*

KUNG POW enter the fist



20TH CENTURY FOX
RATED PG-13

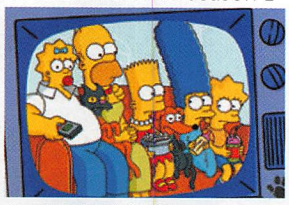
As far as spoofs go, *Kung Pow: Enter the Fist* is as unique as they come. Comedy man Steve Oedekerk wrote, starred in, and directed the movie… as much as he could, anyway. *Kung Pow* is actually made up mostly from footage of a 1976 Hong Kong film directed by Jimmy Wang Yu called *Tiger & Crane Fists*. Oedekerk used modern technology to splice himself in as the main character and fill the altered flick with over-the-top dubbing and more random hilarity than you can shake a bamboo stick at (similar to Woody Allen's spy comedy/dubbing farce, *What's Up, Tiger Lily?*, just turned up a few notches). The Muppet-sounding dialogue can be quite funny (the ol' "muscular guy with a helium voice gag"), but sometimes comes off like a low-rent episode of *Mystery Science Theatre 3000*—minus the robot silhouettes. The plot is nonsensical and, to some extent, nonexistent, and the characters are flat and expendable. But spoofs aren't supposed to have a focus on plot or character development; they're supposed to be 90-minute running jokes. And in that regard, *Kung Pow* succeeds.

VALUE: The DVD packs tons of deleted scenes and dialogue tracks of "what they were really saying." Though, it's a bit of a letdown that the "visual effects" and "making-of" clips were just three-minute montages as opposed to meaty, full-on features.

NICK HURWITCH

movie ●●●○○
dvd ●●●○○

THE SIMPSONS season 2



20TH CENTURY FOX
RATED PG-13

This complete second season is four discs of great fun and is packed full of classic *Simpsons*' moments—fans should feel right at home. While *Season One* was, as described on the DVD package, "a series of wildly successful experiments," *Season Two* is what the show became in later life. It has hallmarks like the first appearances of Troy McClure and the aliens Kang and Kodos, Blinky the three-eyed fish, and memorable moments like Bart's short trip to Hell and Marge's campaign against *Itchy and Scratchy*. For fans and laymen alike, *Season Two* is a hilarious addition to any DVD collection.

VALUE: The episode commentary recites a lot of *Simpsons* history; it mostly features select writers, creator Matt Groening and producer Mike Reiss talking about how much fun they had making the show in its hugely successful second year. They even detail how they wanted to meet a Beatle and thusly recruited Ringo Starr to record voiceover for an episode. The package also includes Bart's music videos *Deep Deep Trouble* and *Do the Bart Man*, both of which come with commentary and are eerily familiar—1990 wasn't *that* long ago. The jewels, though, besides episode commentary, are the "how-to" animation documentary and interview with Groening and Brooks, both taking a behind-the-scenes look at the show. Overall: more than worth your DVD dollar.

PHIL HORNSHAW

movie ●●●●○
dvd ●●●●●

NO SUCH THING



MGM
RATED R

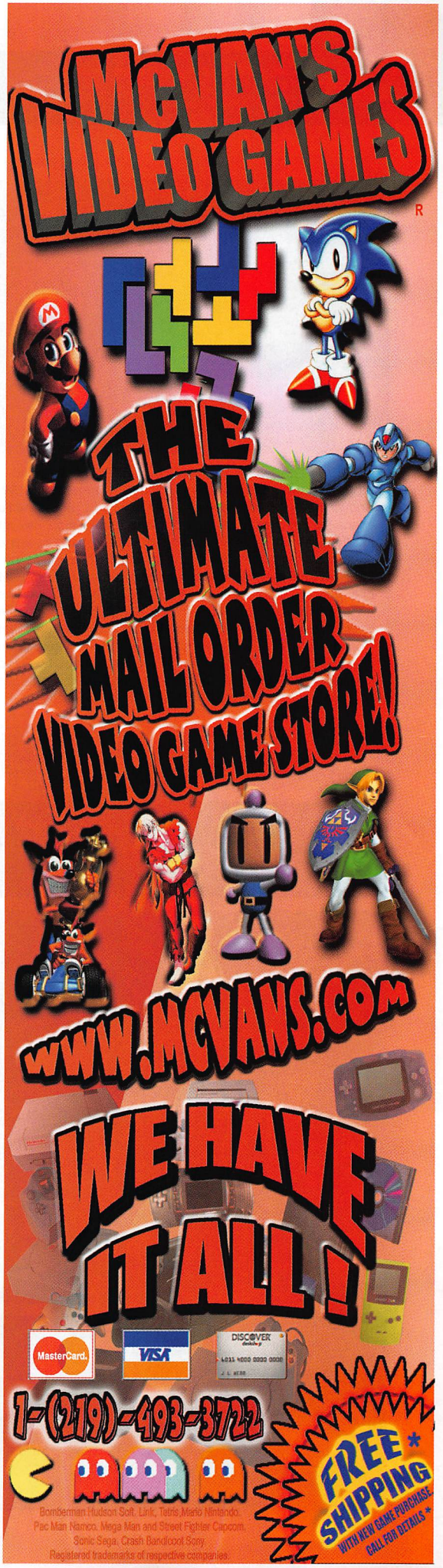
No Such Thing is a surprise, to say the least. Filmmaker Hal Hartley, who's been under the mainstream radar for his entire career, crafted this provocative fantasy flick; and since he's always been in the independent zone, the script ultimately benefits in way of creativity. When Beatrice (Sarah Polley), an intern at a trashy TV news magazine, is sent out on her first assignment to Iceland to investigate the disappearance of a film crew (which included her fiancée), she discovers something uncommon to most onscreen fantasies—a hideous monster (cooked to excellence by Robert John Burke) who cusses more viciously than George Carlin. The offbeat, snappy dialogue—sprinkled with every profanity in the book—gives *No Such Thing* a dose of humor, but it's primarily a product of the fire-breathing brute's suffering. After gobbling up thousands of locals throughout many centuries—mostly a result of boredom—his only wish is to find a poison to wreck his immortality. Beatrice promises help, convincing the beast to come with her to New York, propelling the tale into more *Natural Born Killers* than a modern day *Beauty and the Beast*—the media bites, exploiting the heathen; and his torment continues.

VALUE: Since the story is so clever, it would seem obvious to give Hartley a commentary track to gab on. Not a chance—this disc is empty.

JON M GIBSON

movie ●●●○○
dvd ●○○○○

ing ass in a more adventure-oriented movie that feels closer in tone and action to the video-games," thus trading the father/daughter drama for more quest . . . Perky pecs: Special effects house **Industrial Light & Magic has been approached by *King Conan* producers regarding some contract work**, most curious about the possibilities of CG enhancements of human muscle structure. Is Arnold getting flabby? . . . Psychosis ocean: **A first look at the set of director Steven Soderbergh's remake of *Solaris*** (at left). The film, set on a space station hovering over the mysterious ocean world of Solaris, tails a psychologist as he enters the craft to uncover what has befallen the crew . . . *Mission* Fincher: Tom Cruise tells the *Chicago Sun-Times*, in regards to **David (*Fight Club*) Fincher's attachment as director to the next *Mission: Impossible***: "I'm talking to David and hopefully it will all come together. To see Fincher unload on *MI:3*—well, I'd like to see that" . . .



MR. SHOW: The Complete First and Second Seasons
HBO
AVAILABLE NOW

IDOL BLABBER

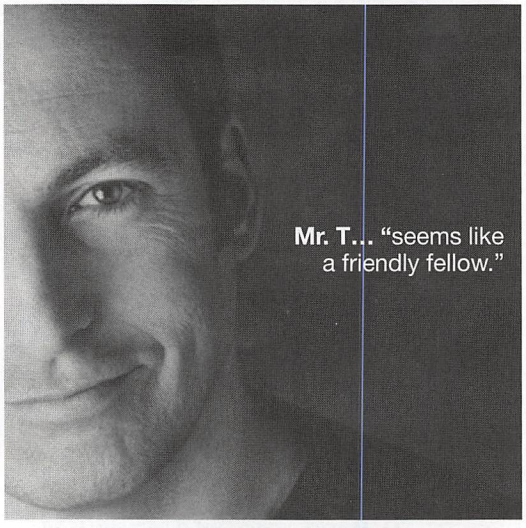
Bob Odenkirk

Back in 1995, two guys—aptly named Bob and David—took sketch comedy to unfathomable heights. With *Mr. Show*, they proved that no matter how odd the comedic scene may appear, it's always possible to transition into yet another seemingly unrelated, equally odd scenario (imagine if *Saturday Night Live* was a continuity of the opening monologue—if the show never stopped and just kept flowing). It only ran for 10 episodes on HBO—an extremely short two seasons—but the duo definitely made their mark on the world of premium cable. Their next comedic venture, *Run Ronnie Run*, will eventually be released, too. Now, in an attempt to shamelessly promote the brand-new, two-*disc Mr. Show* DVD set, Bob Odenkirk, one half of the hilarious pair, entertains 30 extremely important questions.

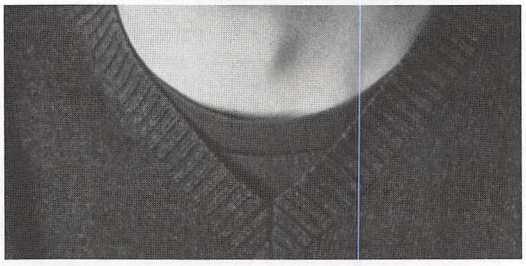


words jon m gibson





Mr. T... "seems like a friendly fellow."



In one word, *Mr. Show* is... superextrafantabuloriffical!

In two words, *Mr. Show* is... occasionally funny.

***Mr. Show: The Sketch Comedy Movie* might result in...** the devil shivering.

Live comedy is comparable to... the best ping-pong tournament ever.

A language barrier only... helps when you are lying.

People who make up words... are fooltastic.

L.A. traffic is to an overpopulated, festering ant colony as... though ants were people who drove cars on overcrowded highways.

The world on the brink of nuclear attack would... look like Pakistan and India today.

Airport security... is a phantasm of a dream wished by an imaginary blue fuffaroo.

***The Crocodile Hunter*...** is a good show, I heard. Haven't seen it yet, but plan to. Soon.

Gary Coleman... should be treated more thoughtfully by the public that used his tortured childhood to distract themselves from their pathetic lives for so many years.

Mr. T... seems like a friendly fellow.

Mr. Tea, being the close relative to Mr. Coffee... should not have children with Mr. Coffee.

Sitcoms that seemed funny at the time... prove that humor is subjective.

***Pearl Harbor*'s budget would have been better spent on...** a hundred more Ben Affleck movies—he's great!

It's okay to pet a rabies-infested dog, foaming furiously from the mouth, because... I said so.

It's also PC to steal someone's wheelchair because... it will motivate them.

But, by all means, swiping the TV remote from a warm hand is... sneaky.

Being a world-renowned porn star would be nifty if... you could avoid the part where people unknowingly sell their dignity.

But it would ultimately be better to be a world-renowned prostitute than a famous comedian because... you wouldn't ever have to attend one of those Kennedy Center honors.

The most trouble I've gotten into after playing a practical joke was... being arrested and gang-raped in prison.

Gathered around a poker table with God, Jesus and Mary after they all farted simultaneously would... cause me, raised catholic, to feel it necessary to take the blame.

The worst place to lose your passport would be... in a foreign country, I think.

A funny story about monkeys was when... Curious George made all those pancakes.

15/3 is a ratio for... any *and* every situation.

The best way to get arrested fairly quickly, go to jail for a night, and then have a really humorous yarn to spin for friends the next day is... insult a cop.

The secret agenda of the vegetarian meat burger is... to cleanse the colon.

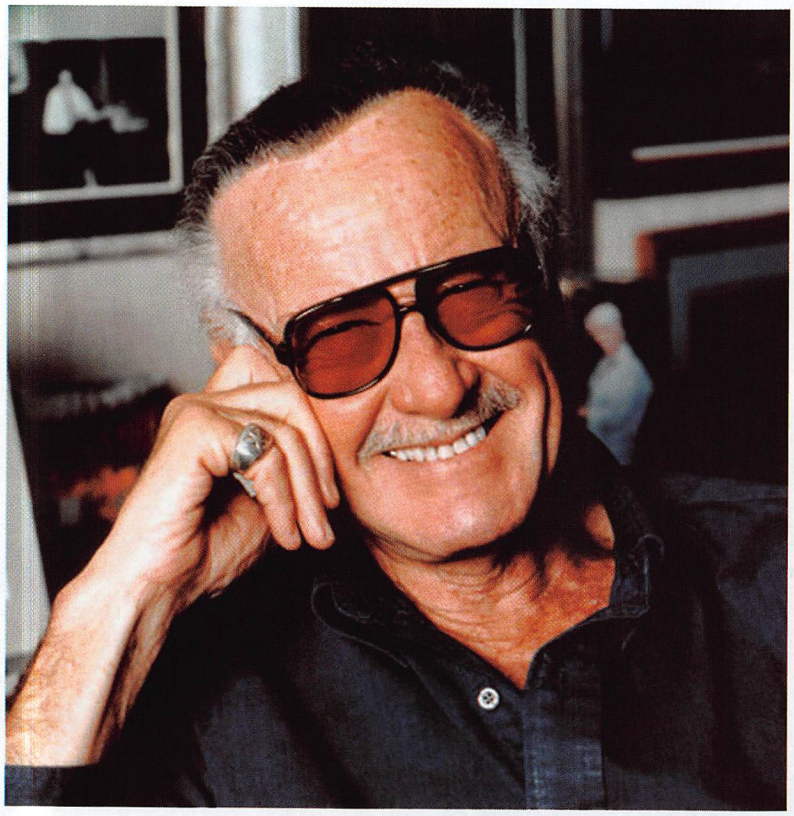
Leprechauns are always losing their pots of gold, even though they are reportedly chock full of luck, because... it makes a good yarn.

My new movie, *Run Ronnie Run* will be infinitely cool because... you decide it is.

So to the critics that describe *Run Ronnie Run* as "indescribably rancid," I say... well, I don't like some parts of it, too. Really. I mean it.

In two words, *Mr. Show* is... overly complex.

In one word, *Mr. Show* is... funny-ish.



"...half a century [has] passed and I haven't gotten into the *real* world yet"

THE EXCELSIOR! MAN

You've probably heard his name a million times since *Spider-Man* struck gold at the box office. But aside from creating web-slinging Peter Parker decades ago, Stan Lee also laid the foundation for some other pretty illustrious superheroes: *The Fantastic Four*, *The Incredible Hulk*, *The Mighty Thor*, *The Uncanny X-Men*. While he discusses his trials and tribulations in comicdom on the new DVD, *Stan Lee's Mutants, Monsters and Marvels*, we were more curious about "The Man" himself. And even though he won't admit it, the 79-year-old *is* a real-life crime-fighter. His superpower is doing what he does best: writing at least 10 pages a day.

words jon m gibson

Q: So why comics, Stan; why not flip burgers or sell souvenir hats? A: I didn't intend to. I applied for a job at a magazine company, and I thought they were regular magazines. When I went up there, they wanted me to work in the comic department. And in those days, comics weren't incredibly prestigious—it was a little embarrassing. But I figured I'd stay for a while, get a little experience, and then go out into the *real* world. But every few months or so, I'd get a raise, it got more interesting, I'd be doing more exciting stuff. And before I knew it, a half a century had passed by and I haven't gotten out into the *real* world yet.

Q: You're 79. Does your creativity just keep expanding? A: Now I'm 79-and-a-half. But I'm a late model. [laughs] Well, I don't know. I've always found it very easy to think of stories and to write the stories. And it seems to be as easy *or* easier now than it's ever been.

Q: That nickname, Stan "The Man" Lee, has stuck with you for some time. Where'd it come from? A: What happened was, there used to be a famous baseball player years ago—and they called him Stan "The Man." It rhymes with Stan, I guess. [laughs] So some fan dreamed up that name for me, and I kinda like it. It sounds very macho.

Q: Are you a macho guy? A: No, I run like hell. [laughs]

Q: Tell me about the comics' code of the '50s. You've been in the industry for quite some time; you've seen the public change and censorship gradually die down. A: Oh yeah, 'cause in the '50s when we they started the code, if we drew a girl in a revealing costume and you saw any cleavage, we'd be told, "You better cover up some of that cleavage." Now the girls are practically half-nude—some of them *are* nude.

Q: Any awfully silly circumstances? A: I once did a western where somebody fired a gun. And it was just a shot of the cowboy shooting a gun—there was a puff of smoke at the gun barrel, and a straight, horizontal line indicating the trajectory of the bullet. And I was told that that panel was too violent. So I said, "Well, how the hell is it violent? It's just a shot of a gun being fired." And they said the puff of smoke was too big, believe it or not. So I made the puff of smoke a little smaller and mankind and childhood was saved.

Q: Since you've been doing this for such a long while, have you developed any superpowers you'd like to share with our readers? A: Nah, because like all superheroes, I'm sworn to secrecy. If I told you, I'd have to kill you. [laughs]

Q: You've been a busy guy lately—*Spider-Man* opened huge, and you've touring around doing lots of press. Do you ever sleep? A: Not as much as I'd like to. I had to do Howard Stern this morning; I had to get up at 4:30. I wasn't happy about that. And now I'm doing *you* while I'm trying to eat a slice of pizza and getting violent indigestion.

Q: You have all those nifty catch phrases, while I have none. Can I borrow some? A: Some catch phrases? "Excelsior!" "Hang Loose," "Face Front," "'Nuff Said," "Make Mine Marvel." I don't want to give you any more—you'll think I'm showin' off.

Q: When you're finally done fighting crime, will you ever have your head happily frozen next to Walt Disney—or are you immortal? A: Well, I hope I can keep doing this forever. I enjoy doing it. People always say to me, "When are you going to retire?" I get angry, because I don't think I look old enough to retire. Secondly: You know, when you retire, [then] you can do all the things you've ever wanted to do. But I'm doin' everything I've ever wanted to do, so I hope I can keep doin' it.

Q: You're still only one man, Stan. How did you *really* conjure up all those characters? A: I happen to be incredibly brilliant. It should be manifestly obvious. Make sure you put that I laughed after that. [laughs] **play**

A sampling of Lee's colorful resume, chock full with plenty of spiders and other assorted mutants.





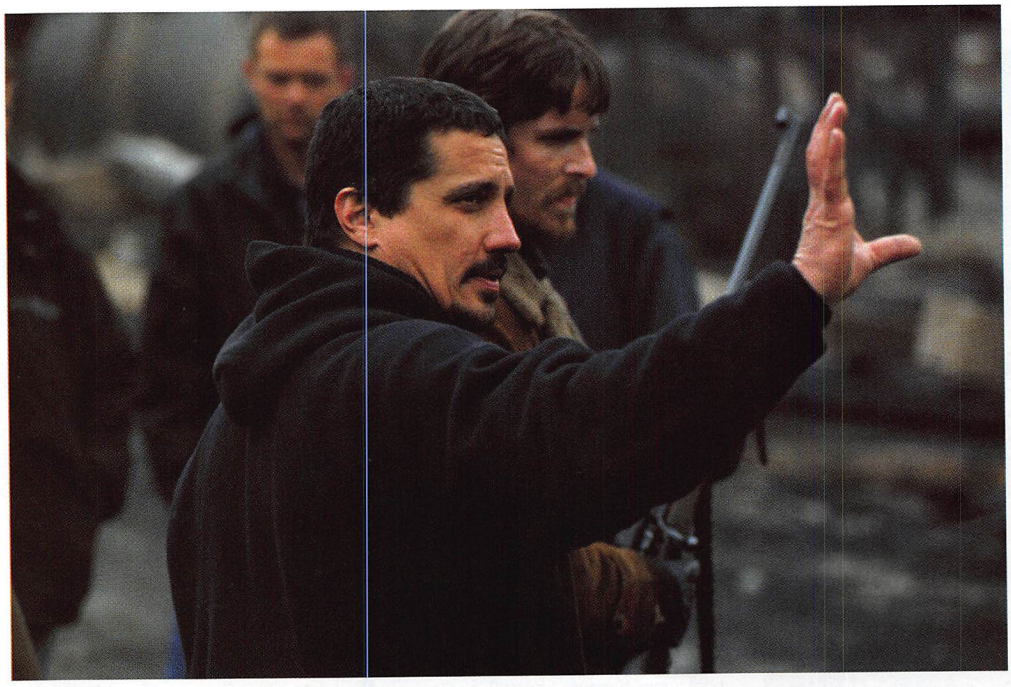
REIGN OF FIRE
Touchtone
IN THEATERS NOW



PLAYING WITH FIRE

Dragons tend to play second banana to dinosaurs these days, so it's about time that the filmmaking community finally decided to pay homage to the most ferocious of scaly beasts. They soar, they breathe fire, and they're perpetually hungry—what's not to adore? With nearly uncountable episodes of *The X-Files* on his filmography—including 1998's big screen version—there's no doubt that director Rob Bowman doesn't have a grasp of the sci-fi/fantasy genre. And with *Star Wars* and *Spider-Man* hype finally nearing an exit, *Reign of Fire*, rumored to have a budget ascending over $120 million, promises to be the most epic of summer movies—not just this year, but any. Bowman agrees. Here's why:

words jon m gibson



Director Rob Bowman on set in Ireland; the film was shot on location using medieval castles as a means of sanctuary for the last surviving humans.

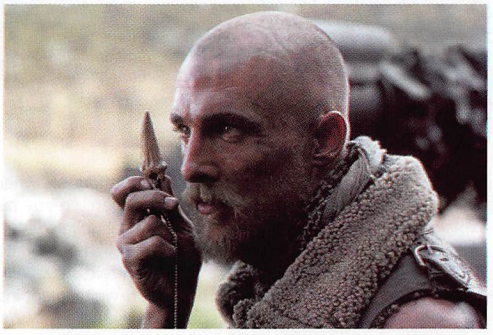
First off, what a fantastic concept! From where did it spawn?
The idea came from a couple of guys who, I believe, were from Wisconsin who, I was told, were a couple of milk truck drivers—that might be an expression, but it makes for a better story either way. [Laughs] What if you took the great mythological dragons and combined them in the textures of World War II, but you did it contemporary? And you didn't do it in a medieval setting, with wizards and warlocks, but with tanks and castles and soldiers and dragons, and then tried to play that in a realistic tone. That was the seed idea. And the original scripts—the ones that I read—were very fleshed and wildly imaginative. I felt that it was a bit too much like *Independence Day*—it was more about how much you can put the dragons on screen. I knew two things: 1) It wasn't scary enough; and 2) nobody would make it—it would just cost too much money. My take on it was, what if I did it more in the vein of *Jaws* or the first *Alien* movie where it's more about anticipation and expectation, and told through the eyes of the characters, and what it's like to live in a world that's dominated by dragons—you're trying to figure out a way to overcome a far superior opponent.

So you're sparing head-to-head dragon encounters, in effect, provoking fear?
Yeah. So I sort of boiled it down to its essence. There are different philosophies set forth about how to deal with them. Some people think, if you wanna overwhelm the dragons—if you want to overcome their dominance—you just have to take them on. Other people say, "No, it's impossible. They're too superior. They're too overwhelming. Why don't we just dig in and wait till they starve off because eventually they'll run out of food? The world is a finite area, eventually they'll be nothing left to burn and nothing left to eat—they'll die."

"MY TAKE ON IT WAS, WHAT IF I DID [*REIGN OF FIRE*] MORE IN THE VEIN OF *JAWS* OR THE FIRST *ALIEN* MOVIE WHERE IT'S MORE ABOUT ANTICIPATION AND EXPECTATION, AND TOLD THROUGH THE EYES OF THE CHARACTERS."







(Clockwise from left) Christian Bale holds a dragon egg; the humans equip for war against the beasts; Matthew McConaughey as a futurist "slayer"

You're just hoping that nature will run its course, and how long will that take? At the rate that [the dragons] are going, that's a few hundred years—many generations of people. Will there be any people left after that last dragon starves off? That's theoretically a good idea, but, jeez, you're asking for a lot of divine intervention.

It sounds like a constant battle.
Just the day-to-day is a huge struggle. You need the sun to grow food, but if you go outside, you're swimming with sharks—yeah, you may not get bit, but you probably won't see it comin' when you do. So the trick is, *when* do you go outside to harvest? You can't stay indoors forever—you'll go mad. Literally, when you step outside, the first thing you do is look up and make sure you can move the next ten feet. And then you go ten feet and you look up again—you look behind you—basically, making the outdoors and the sky the domain of the dragons.

So these creatures—the dragons—aren't easy target practice?
Part of my plan was to make sure that when you encounter a dragon that it is a *huge* problem to deal with him—that you just don't run outside and throw a knife. First, you have to have the nerve to jump into the cage with the lion, and yeah, maybe you'll kill it—but, boy, you're just so out of your zone. I've been on shoots where I've been with lions; yeah, they're tethered to the ground but there's nothin' between the lion and you. When they look you in the eye, it is *so* clear how the wild kingdom is far superior in terms of the food chain than man—man is maybe the smartest, but by no means has any artillery to deal with lions, tigers and bears. Not a drop. Now you give 'em wings and you give 'em fire—well, then forget it. I made it quite a problem that when you engage with a dragon that it's highly unlikely that you're gonna come out of it.

It must have been difficult to hone the special effects.
Well, it's all about design, planning and execution—and then the patience to make them perfect. It's a lot of thinking and collaboration with the artists, and then making sure the idea behind the moments is realistic—that you're dealing with a f—kin' animal whose intentions are the opposite of yours. [Laughs] It's just a long-term problem; it's not solvable. I think we did a very good job of fitting this digital creatures into a very realistic, harsh, gritty environment.

So you didn't just go to a casting agency?
I just cast 'em. [Laughs] And they're very difficult to get out of their trailer when they don't want to work. And the studio was complaining about all the mess and the poop. [Laughs]

Probably the most exhilarating plot device is that of the "archangels," those absolutely psychotic skydivers that chase dragons in flight.
You know, there is logic behind those paratroopers. It's *insane*, but it *can* provide positive results. That's not our element—sky is not, nor is the ocean. So we don't have a lot of dexterity when you're trying to go as fast as you possibly can—there's not a lot of left and right, stopping and starting; you just rock. Yet the dragon can do whatever he wants. But they have a method of baiting the dragon—their instincts are to hunt and kill, and then how do you use that against them. And that's the basis behind the "archangel" sequence.

Did you have doubts about tackling such a massive project?
I think what kept myself grounded is that I knew *very* clearly the tone that [*Reign of Fire*] needed to be. I've been directing long enough that I know I can solve problems, and that I was very excited about the results of the script *if* I pulled it off. I'm in the theater with popcorn and a Diet Coke. Do I want to see this movie? Yeah, I cannot wait to see this movie!

Concerning special effects, what's you thought process like on a movie like *Reign of Fire*—how do you budget everything?
These effects cost a great deal of money. There is a term "photo real," which are "Look, when this is done, you won't be able to tell the difference between the human standing next to the dragon." If you want that level of perfection, than the shot's gonna cost *this* much. Well, then they say, "Here's you're visual effects budget. Spend it any way you want." Now you can have *half* as many perfect shots, or *twice* as many not-as-perfect shots. And ultimately, it's all about storytelling. Story is more important than anything—that's what takes us on our journey. **play**

EIGHT LEGGED FREAKS
Warner Bros.
IN THEATERS NOW



ARAC ATTACK

"HAVE YOU EVER SEEN THE ASS OF A TARANTULA? IT'S LIKE JENNIFER LOPEZ."

Nearly everyone on the planet gets a bit uncomfortable when a Daddy Long Legs jumps onto their skin, crawling up their arm. It's a common, creepy sensation—as actress Kari Wuhrer explains, "Being that they're small, they can get up into little orifices that would freak you out." *Eight Legged Freaks*, the latest from disaster film provocateurs Roland Emmerich and Dean Devlin, promises to excite that very fear ten-fold. Like all true '50s-style horrorshows, this medium-budget tribute to classic, black-and-white, giant insect flicks couples that fright with a sly, dry wit. But the movie can speak for itself; it's Ms. Wuhrer (most recognizable from her lead role on the long-running *Sliders*) that we're worried about.

words jon m gibson



(Clockwise from top) Wuhrer in shotgun mode, ready to spit some spider goo; co-star David Arquette confronts one of the giant arachnids.

Q: *Sliders*, *Anaconda*, and now *Eight Legged Freaks*—you have a thing for the fantastical, eh? A: Well, I think it's got a thing for me. [Laughs] Sci-fi and fantasy definitely has the most loyal legion of fans. It's a great way to exercise your imagination and stay childlike.

Q: So you have a hairy leg fetish? A: Yeah. [Laughs hysterically] That's great!

Q: Since the movie is fueled by that all-too-common fear of spiders, tell me what freaks the shit out of you. A: Unemployment. [Laughs] And I'm much more afraid of gummy worms than I am of the real thing. Creepy crawly things don't really bother me that much.

Q: Gummy worms? A: You know, I just think that whole synthetic food thing is just bad. [Laughs] I'm into these things called Pirate's Booty—it's all-natural.

Q: Anything else? A: Oh, I don't like cockroaches—that's for sure. But the thing about *Eight Legged Freaks* is, that if you have a spider problem it's not really the same fear because these are gigantic spiders. The creepy-ness of spiders is being that they're small, they can get up into little orifices that would freak you out. But these giant ones, they have personalities like gremlins. So while it is kind of scarier—the element of surprise in the film—it's also really funny.

Q: Well, you kick lots of spider ass. A: Yeah, I kick serious spider ass. They have big asses, actually. Have you ever seen the ass of a tarantula? It's like Jennifer Lopez. [Laughs]

Q: I just jumped out of a plane, and I'm deafly afraid of heights. So are you the type to stare your fears in the eye, kicking them in the balls? A: Okay, that is something I could never, ever, ever do. I could *never* jump out of an airplane. I don't have a need to do that. I've been hand-gliding before, so it's not about a fear of heights or anything. I hate the feeling of when your stomach is in your mouth.

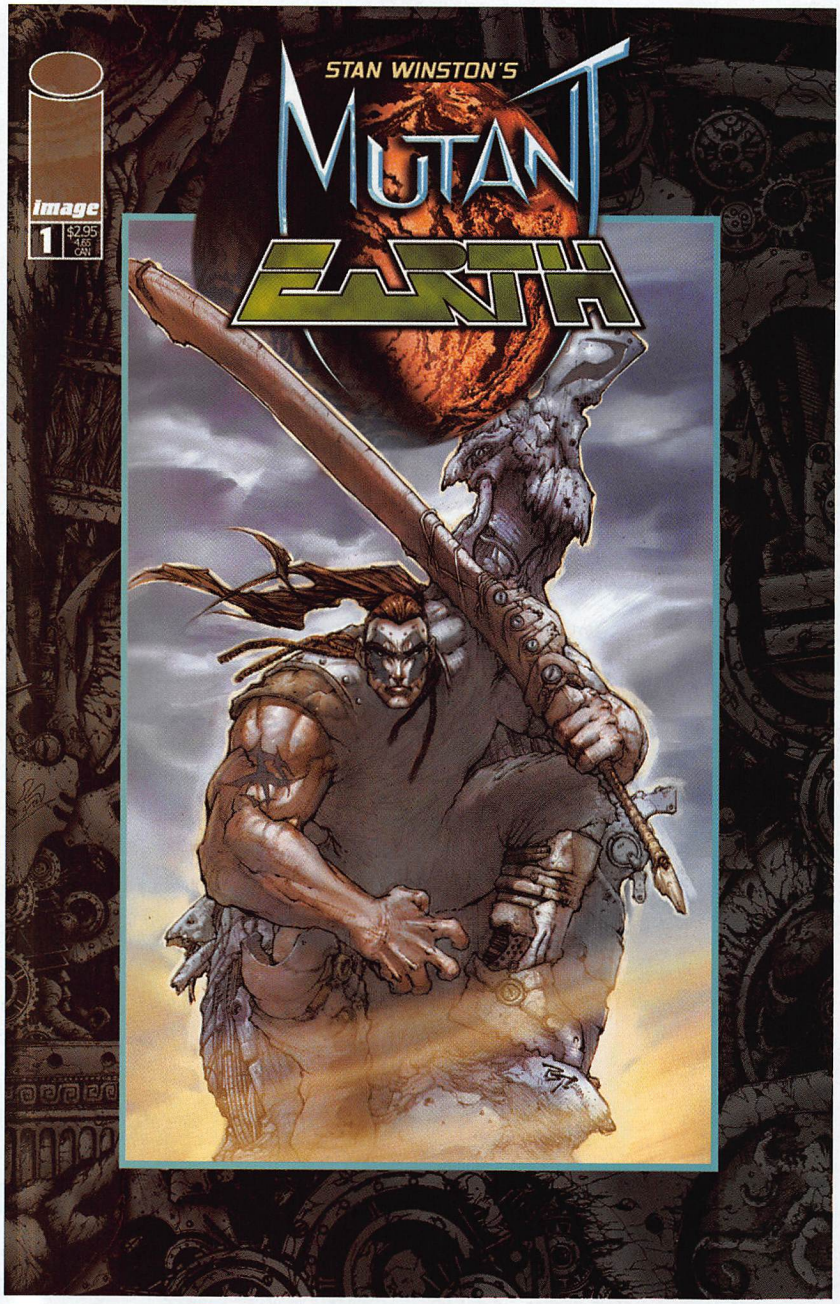
Q: That wonderful floating sensation? A: Like the free-fall ride at Magic Mountain. There's new rides that opened up at Magic Mountain and they're saying that they're too fast and high, that people are getting brain hemorrhages. I was planning a trip with my friends, but then I read that. Then I was like, maybe I'll just stick with the wooden coaster at Coney Island.

Q: Ever gone out with an eight-legged freak? A: I've gone out with lots of two-legged freaks, that's for sure. I'm trying to find one normal guy in a sea of arachnids.

Q: If you could have eight of any single body part, what would it be? A: Don't go there! [Giggles girlishly] Well, I hear that the sense of smell is really the direct link to the gateway of eternity. It's the only sense that we have, that after our body dies and our brain is still alive, still continues to function. It's the sense greatest connected with your memories. So I think if I had eight noses, that I'd be guaranteed a safe journey into the afterlife. [Giggles again]

Q: That was very articulate. But I've gotta know, does that sticky, spider goo have a tangy taste? A: [Giggles] It was lime Jell-O and oatmeal. I don't want to give too much away, because I still want people to get the creepy sense of spider goo when they see the film, but it wasn't bad.

Q: What about PETA? Did they boycott the set? A: Absolutely not. We had a dog, ostriches, and spiders—we had a lot of animals on set on a daily basis. There's no one more on top of their game than The Humane Society. So when we actually had the live spiders on the set, of course you can't hurt them, but they also couldn't be fed on the set because they're fed live crickets. The Humane Society wouldn't let them feed the spiders because the crickets would be getting hurt. So the spiders could only work X-amount of hours and then they had to be removed and be fed elsewhere. [Laughs]



MUTANT APOCALYPSE

Just glancing at his resume, you can't deny that Stan Winston is a man of imagination. The Terminator, the Queen Alien, Edward Scissorhands, Predator—all legendary creatures that were born from a dark pocket in the back of his mind. So it was only a matter of time before Hollywood's leading monster maker transitioned into the comic-book universe. In *Mutant Earth*, he explores the desolate year of 2099 A.D., five years after The Great Alien Invasion has left the once peaceful planet a battleground for violent, hideous misfits of nature. Humanity's only defender is Trakk, a heroic immortal that fights with the "ferocity of a lion even against hopeless odds," as the comic's opener briskly reveals. Winston explains the rest.

words jon m gibson

Are comics a natural progression for you?
Comics were my start, so why not comics? I've been putting it off for so many years. I always wanted to do my own comics, I've been a comic book fan since I was a young boy; I'm still a young boy—I just have gray hair now. There's a new Stan in town.

With *Mutant Earth*, where are you taking readers?
Trakk is immortal, came into being in 100 A.D, and has traveled through time. He's a monster hunter; he has an immortal foe, Vaquoul, that he has to eventually deal with. And *Mutant Earth* is a post-apocalyptic setting for us to introduce Trakk to the world. Trakk is the ultimate reluctant hero; he's got amazing powers. He has what we call his "big gun," his oversized arm, which is an extremely powerful weapon, but he has to use it sparingly because it drains him of energy. He doesn't want to be here, he doesn't want this onus to be on his back. But the time has come for him to come to fruition, and it's in *Mutant Earth*.

Desolation and despair, mayhem and death—you're not shy about presenting that to the reader, starting with page one.
Even with post-apocalyptic Earth, it's not post-*hope*. We always need a hope. Along with creating this desolation and death, we have to create the superheroes that take us above it. The fact of the matter is, I don't want to give away the ending, but Trakk doesn't lose. And we keep going, and it's not the end of the Earth, and it's not the end of earthlings, and it's not the end of us.

How appropriate: a Hollywood ending.
Always a Hollywood ending. I don't believe in anything other than popcorn.

Is it easier to put your imagination to paper vs. building a mechanical monster as you do so often in movies?
I must say, this is probably the most fun, the most passionate, the most excited I've been since I've been in the business. Whatever we imagine, we can create a story around and it doesn't take two years and millions and millions of dollars to create. That doesn't mean that I don't foresee these characters coming alive some day in a film, because it's the obvious outcome. If Trakk takes off and people love him—and I'm sure they will—I think he'll be one of our next great action heroes. Obviously, there's going to be a movie to follow.

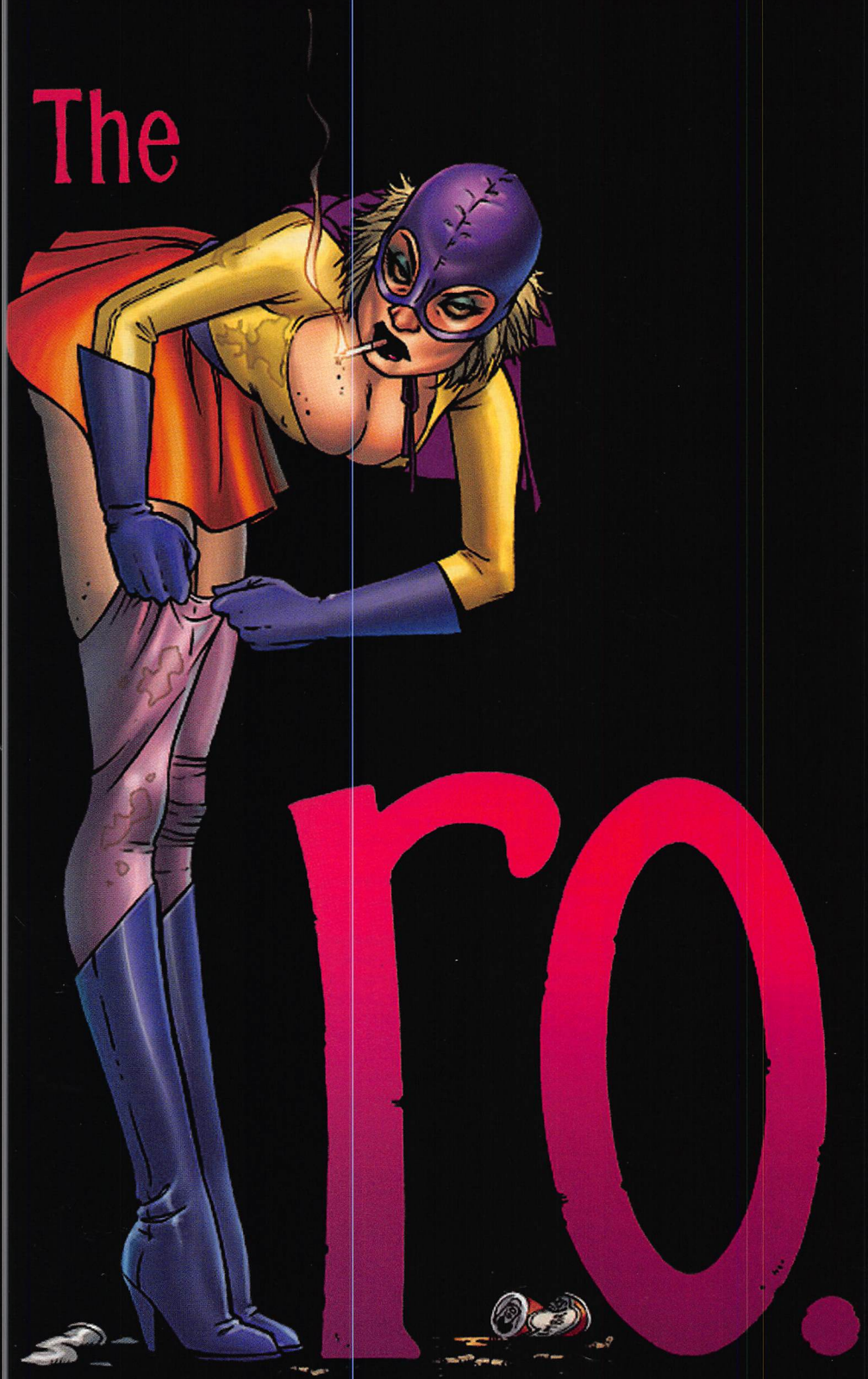
Are comics the ultimate escape for you?
I'm probably the most pacifistic guy I know—I've never owned a gun. But in the fantasy world, I love to see somebody get their head ripped off. In the fantasy world, I love to see monsters tearing our throats out and ripping our guts off. I think it's healthy, and I think it's cathartic, and I think it's good for kids to allow themselves to think the most bizarre thoughts. **play**





"THIS IS PROBABLY THE MOST PASSIONATE I'VE BEEN SINCE I'VE BEEN IN THE BUSINESS. WHATEVER WE IMAGINE, WE CAN CREATE A STORY AROUND AND IT DOESN'T TAKE TWO YEARS AND MILLIONS OF DOLLARS TO CREATE."

THE PRO
Image (one-shot)
AVAILABLE NOW



HOOKER AS THE 'HERO

The first paragraph of the sales pitch is enough to tease any fan of superheroes: "She curses, she smokes, she breast feeds, and she blows away the competition." That's *The Pro*, a brave new comic from some very brave, award-pilfering comic book vets—writer Garth Ennis (*Preacher*, *The Punisher*), artists Amanda Conner (*Codename: Knockout*, *Gatecrasher*) and Jimmy Palmiotti (*Superboy*, *Sci-Spy*), and colorist Paul Mounts (*Just a Pilgrim*, *X-Men*). The product of an intergalactic bet, this "family-friendly" one-shot opens as super powers are bestowed on the most unlikely of humans—a disgruntled Denny's waitress by day, wise-ass hooker by night. They had the balls to publish it, so we sure as hell couldn't pass up the chance to promote one of the filthiest comics in years. Garth, Jimmy, and Amanda let loose in our seminar of smut—and what a joyous conversation it was.

words jon m gibson

***The Care Bears*, *My Little Pony*, Elmo—none of these things come to mind when I think of *The Pro*. Where did this, shall we say, "refreshing" slice of comicdom come from?**

Garth: Well, not exactly sure. Been kicking this idea around for ages.

Jimmy: It all came together when Garth, Amanda and I found ourselves drinking one night in a bar in Essen, Germany called "Fritz-Patricks" and Garth was talking about *Pro*. Amanda and I were instantly interested and I went on a mission to find a publisher.

Well, Barbie does ring a bell. Didn't you have a hand in drawing the anatomically incorrect play doll years ago, Amanda?

Amanda: Yes, that was me. The Pro is like the anti-Barbie. I always wanted to draw something way, way different from that plastic bimbo—and, boy, is this *way*, *way* different.

In all seriousness, though, how difficult was it to get the misadventures of a superhero prostitute published?

Garth: Easy as piss. Jimmy pitched it and Image snapped it up.

Jimmy: Yeah, that's what I made you think, Garth. In reality, I approached a couple of publishers about the project and they wanted to either change things in the book or wanted to own most of it. Jim Valentino [Publisher of Image Comics] is a friend and I approached him with the concept and the talent behind this. After a couple of lawyer things, Jim "snapped it up," as Garth puts it.

So... I dare to tread: What kind of "research" went into *The Pro*?

Amanda: Most of it is stuff I have stored away in my memory. The look of *Pro* comes from years and years of dressing like superheroes for Halloween and observing what real people look like dressed as superheroes at comic conventions. It's how tight spandex looks like on a real body; also, I did my normal amount of painstaking research online—God bless cable modems—finding airplanes, S.W.A.T. team reference, buildings and the usual amount of comic book insanity.

Jimmy: Well, before I met Amanda, I had sex with as many

woman as I could and dressed them like superhero prostitutes. It was a nice change from the nazi uniforms and the slip and slide. [Laughs]

Was there ever any arguments over the size and color of the "stains" on her cape?
Amanda: No, that was all Paul Mounts, the colorist's idea. We told him to go nuts and have fun with it. That man is a chromatic genius.

Fishnet, spandex, stilettos, push-up bra—pick an article of clothing.
Amanda: Hmmmm… fishnets. No, push-up bra. No, wait, fish—can I have both?
Jimmy: I would rather pick at what's in them. [Grinning]

Any particular annoyance about comics, in general, that you'd like to express? The climate is totally changing.
Amanda: Most comics out today have a sort of sameness about them. I would like to see as many different comics out there as there are books. Also, there are a lot of people that still think comics are just for kids, when actually comics for grownups have been around since the 60s—maybe even earlier.
Garth: Too much crap out there that ought to be cancelled; books that the good stuff has to prop up. And let's get more trade paperbacks out there.
Jimmy: I agree… this book throws a light on how silly these old-fashioned superhero comics really are. I just wish that, like our pals overseas do, comics would grow up and explore different genres; as well as have each title come out two or three times a year and be *huge* graphic novels. We get no respect in book chains and stores—that has got to change. Just imagine if only one *X-Men* book, one *Spider-Man* book and one *Superman* book came out a month… there would be more room for projects like these to grow.

I take it that the "may contain mature language" warning means this isn't the story of a fun-loving whore that teaches kids phonics in her spare time. Care to indulge me?
Garth: Quite right. *The Pro* remains her surly, pissed off, long-suffering self throughout. She resolutely refuses to brighten up—and with the life she has, why should she?



"THE PRO IS LIKE THE ANTI-BARBIE... AND, BOY, IS THIS WAY, WAY DIFFERENT."

Is this a book that feminists will enjoy?
Garth: Don't know, I don't know any.
Jimmy: Sure they will. It will give them something else to complain about… those feminists.
Amanda: Real feminists will get a kick out of the book, those that pretend to be feminists probably won't.

How 'bout congressmen?
Garth: Well, it's got prostitution, kinky sex, golden showers, sadism, and denigration of ordinary folks' lives. They ought to lap it up—typical night on the town for the average elected representative.
Amanda: I think they will probably condemn it on the six o'clock news, then sneak into the bathroom every night to get their jollies.

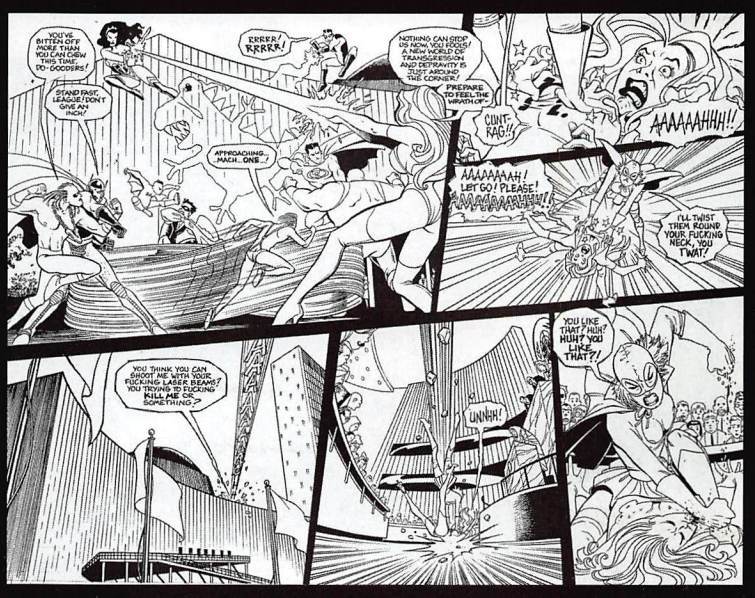
What was the most creative idea for a promo item to tie into this book?
Amanda: Super strength condoms and a paddle that won't break over buns of steel.
Garth: Blow job vouchers, redeemable at any escort agency.
Jimmy: Yeah, that works.

***The Pro* is 56 pages, play magazine is double that—but they're both the same price, a cool six bucks. So if only for one thing, why should folks buy into this tale of a cussing, smoking, breast feeding call girl?**
Garth: They'll either laugh their asses off or drop the book in horror, but they'll get their six bucks worth.
Jimmy: Well, I think the difference is that they will read our book a few times and keep it on the shelf. They should buy *The Pro* because they can pass it on to their kids one day and so on… it should become a family tradition every Christmas morning to read this book by the warm glow of the fireplace.

What're your next *filthy* jobs?
Amanda: Cleaning my cat's litter box then scrubbing down Jimmy.
Garth: *DICKS 2* from Avatar Press in September. Anyone who has read the series will know it is the vilest thing I have ever written. Makes *The Pro* look *like Green Lantern*.
Jimmy: Well, I don't know about "filthy," but *21 Down* and *The Resistance* is coming from Wildstorm in September, both written by Justin Gray and myself, and a *Master of Kung-fu* series I am inking for the Marvel Max line.

And now the ultimate question: Would you *do* her?
Garth: Never paid in my life, mate. **play**

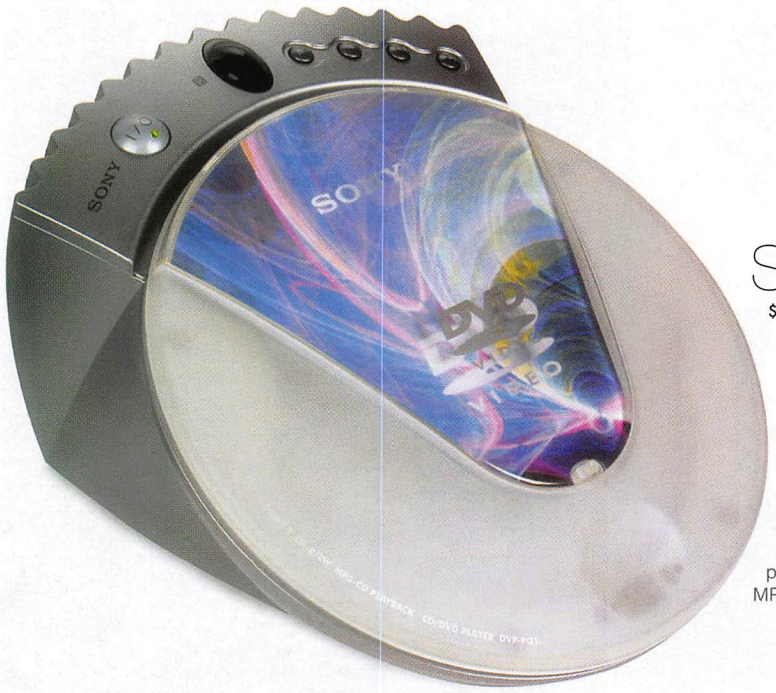




gear

edited by **play** magazine staff





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Some things exist merely to look cool, hoping to be purchased by aesthetes with a bit of expendable income. Such is the case with Sony's DVP-PQ1, a little, round DVD player that is perfect for the bedside or as a second DVD machine to ease the wear on your PS2's disc drive. With its clear window on the top lid, you can place artwork or photographs to give it your own touch (just keep it clean, kids). The only thing the machine lacks is the ability to output component video, but it does support S-Video, DTS and Dolby Digital, and will play CD-Rs, CD-RWs, and MP3-encoded discs.

LOSANGELISTIC PILLOWS

$24 www.losangelistic.com

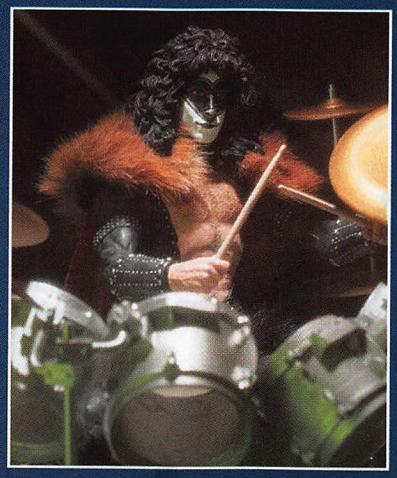


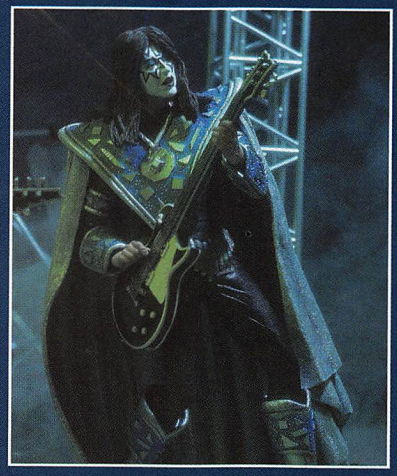
Since when have pillows been cool? Not until now. Losangelistic, the independent designer of these alternative headpads, gives "interior design" an entirely new edge. Just look at their most striking icons: "grenade," printed on camouflage fabric, and "joy," a retro send-back to the Commodore 64 joypad. There's plenty more, too: "fros," "tank" and "knuckles"—all of which are self-explanatory and part of a 12-pillow lineup. Rest easy—and stylish.

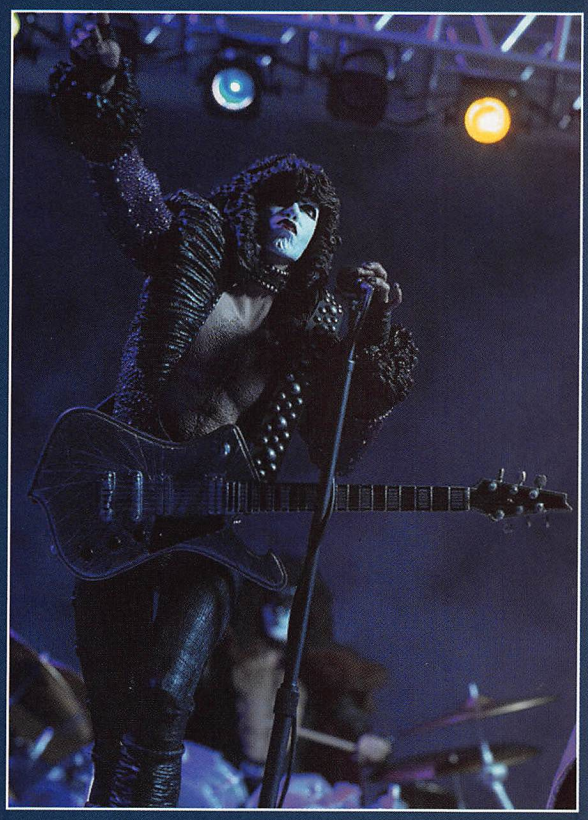
artificial

but not intelligent...



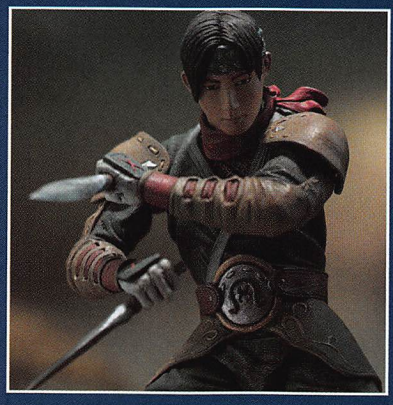






:: thank todd... again

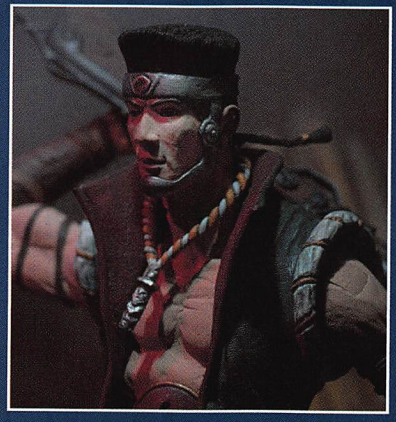
Since McFarlane Toys seems to be the only action-figure manufacturer with any desire to actually market their figs in the non-toy press (that being such a melting pot of print vehicles), we figured we'd just go with the flow until someone else decides it might be a smart move to wrangle some free coverage by, er, sending us some materials. Pictured here, for those of you coming out of a cryogenic state, are Todd's new 12-inch Kiss demons, including the only good Gene Simmons (that being a silent one), and the upcoming Onimusha figures, which look stunning as usual. Pick them up everywhere anything plastic is sold this fall.

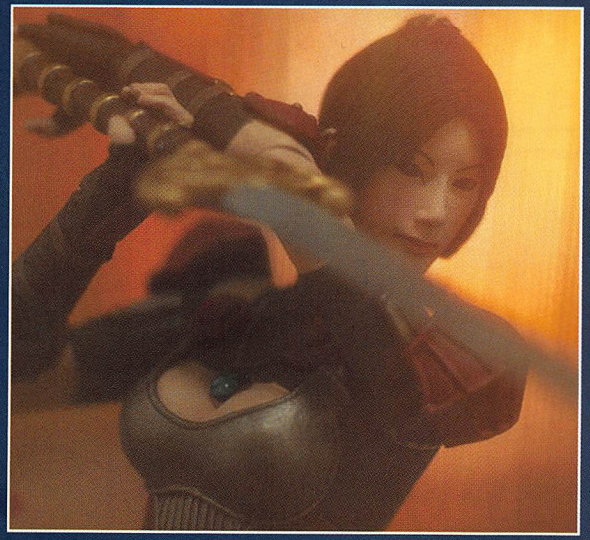




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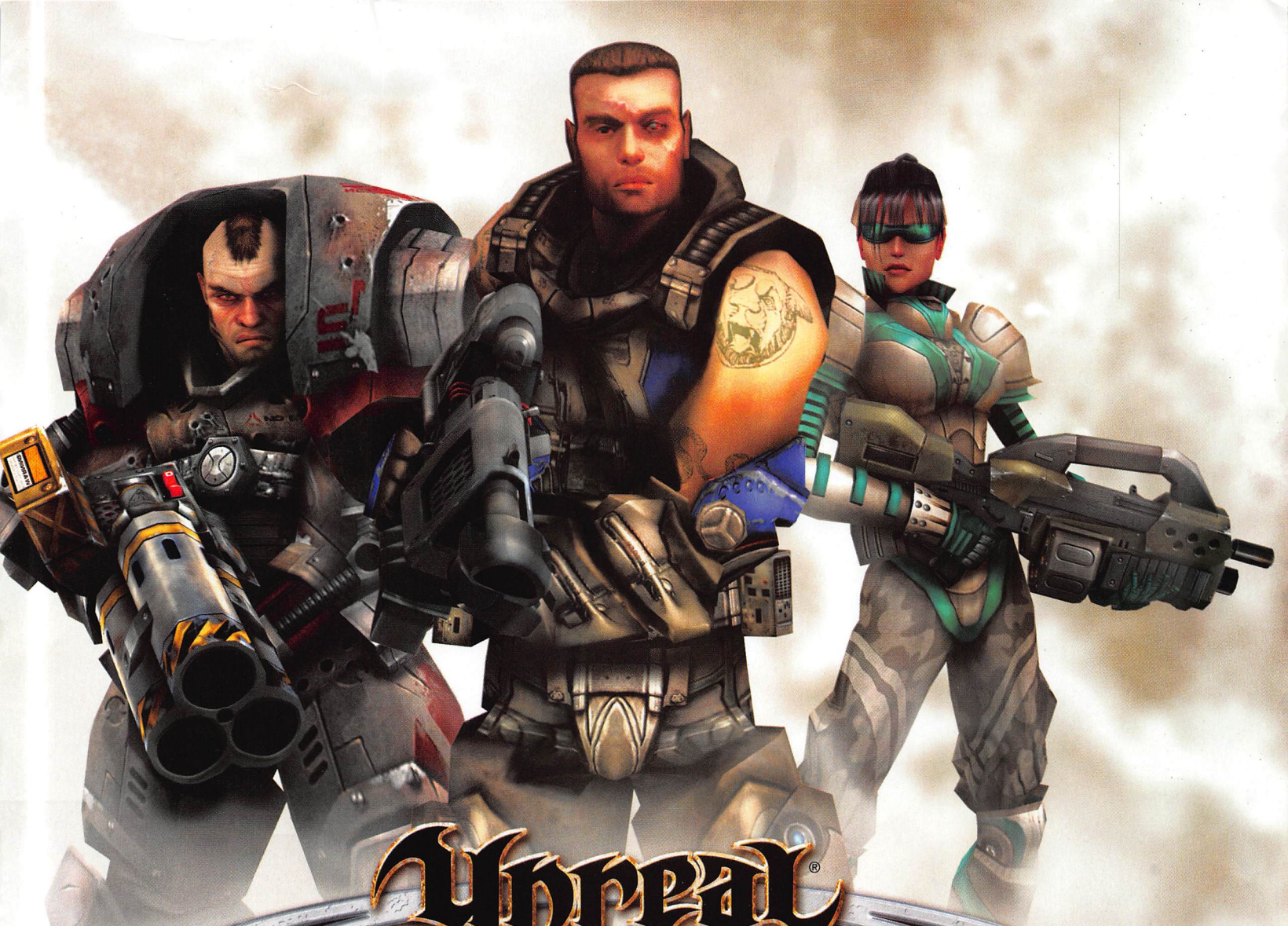
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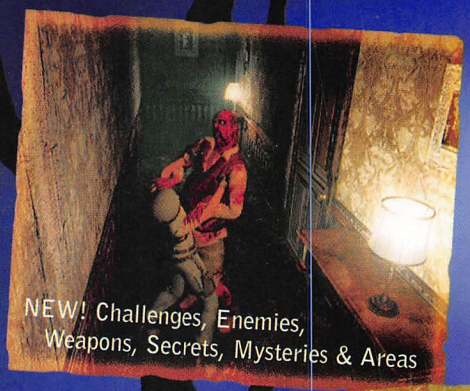
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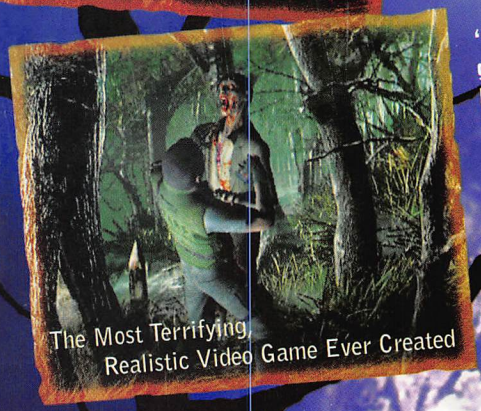
DIGITAL EXTREMES

ATARI

AND YOU THOUGHT YOUR WORST FEARS WERE BEHIND YOU.

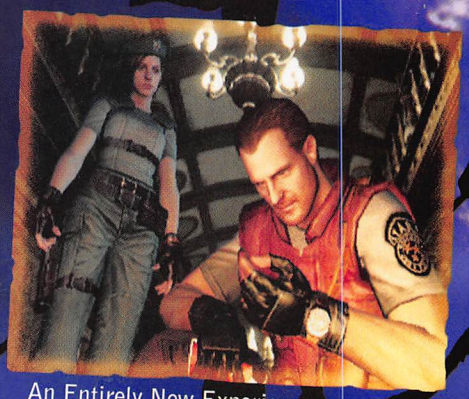


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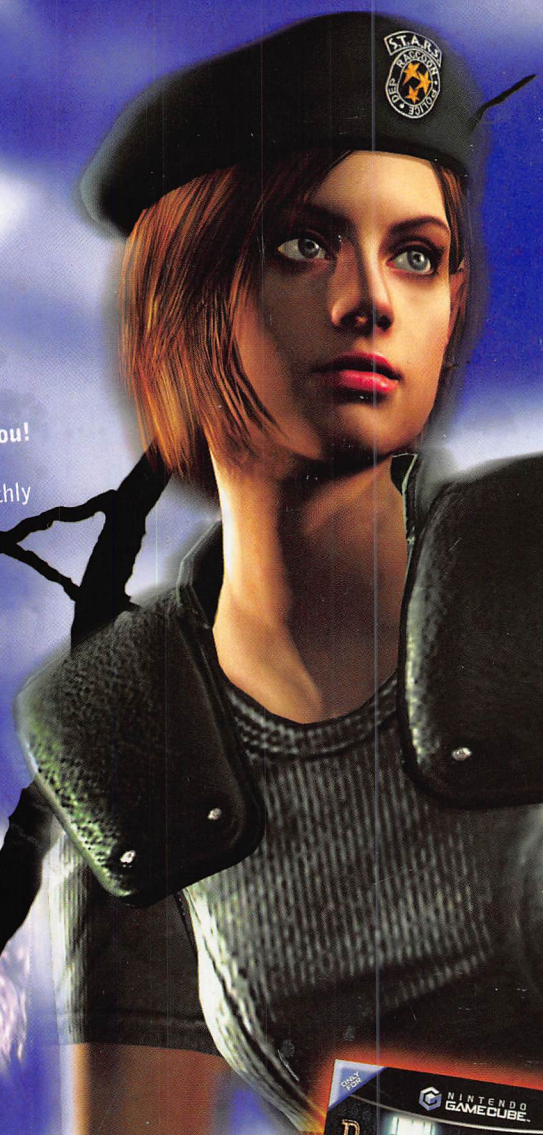


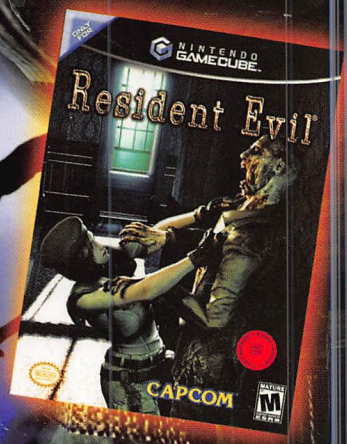
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